

Sūrah Al-Taubah

(Repentance)

Sūrah al-Taubah is Madanī and it has one hundred and twenty nine verses and sixteen sections

Verses 1 – 5

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بَرَاءَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١﴾ فَسِيحُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْزِي الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢﴾ وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَرَسُولُهُ فَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابِ الْيَمِّ ﴿٣﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتِمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤﴾ فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخَذُواهُمْ وَاحْصِرُوهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

Here is a withdrawal (proclaimed) by Allah and His Messenger against the Mushriks* with whom you have a treaty. [1]

So, move in the land freely for four months, and be sure

* Mushriks, anglicized plural of *mushrik*, stands for *al-mushrikīn* – those who associate partners with Allah.

that you can never defeat Allah and that Allah is about to disgrace the disbelievers. [2]

And here is an announcement, from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater Ḥajj, that Allah is free from (any commitment to) the Mushriks, and so is His Messenger. Now, if you repent, it is good for you. And if you turn away, then be sure that you can never defeat Allah. And give those who disbelieve the 'good' news of a painful punishment. [3] Except those of the Mushriks with whom you have a treaty, and they abated nothing of your rights and backed no one against you, so then, fulfill the treaty with them up to their term. Surely, Allah loves the God-fearing. [4]

So, when the sacred months expire, kill the Mushriks wherever you find them. And catch them and besiege them and sit in ambush for them everywhere. Then, if they repent and establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh, leave their way. Surely, Allah is most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [5]

Commentary

Now begins Sūrah Al-Barā'ah which is also called Sūrah Al-Taubah (as written; also Sūrah At-Taubah as pronounced). It is called Barā'ah for the reason that it mentions *barā'ah* or disengagement with the consequences of what the *kuffār* (disbelievers) do. Then, it is also called Taubah because it announces that the repentance of Muslims has been accepted. (Mazharī). It is a feature of this Sūrah that '*bismillāh*' (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ: *Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*: With the name of Allah, the [All-] Merciful, the Very Merciful) is not written in the copies of the Qur'an when the Sūrah begins. However, Bismillāh is written at the head of all Sūrahs of the Qur'an – the sole exception being that of Sūrah Al-Taubah. Before we find out the relevant reason, let us bear in mind that the Holy Qur'an was revealed bit by bit during the period of twenty three years. The verses of a Sūrah were revealed at different times. When Sayyidnā Jibrā'il would come with a revelation, he would also point out to the Divinely intended arrangement of each revealed verse, explaining that it should be placed in such and such Sūrah after such and such 'Āyah (verse). It was in accordance with this Divinely intended arrangement that the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have scribes of the revelation write them up.

And when, at the end of a Sūrah, the next was to begin, 'Bismillāh-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm' would be revealed before the next actually did – which made it easy to understand that the previous Sūrah had concluded and another Sūrah was beginning. All Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'an were revealed in that manner. Sūrah Al-Taubah is, in terms of the order of revelation, among one of the very last Sūrahs. When it began, neither was Bismillāh revealed as customary, nor did the Holy Prophet ﷺ instruct the scribe of the revelation to do that. So, this was how things stood when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم passed away.

When Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī رضى الله عنه arranged the Holy Qur'an in the form of a book during the period of his Caliphate, Bismillāh was not there at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah, an arrangement contrary to that of the rest of Sūrahs. Therefore, a doubt rose – perhaps, this is not an independent Sūrah, or may as well be a part of some other Sūrah. Now, they thought, if this happens to be a part of some other Sūrah, which Sūrah is that? In terms of its subjects, Sūrah Al-Anfāl seemed to fit the slot.

Also, as narrated by Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه elsewhere, 'during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, both these Sūrahs were called: قرنتين (*qarīnatayn*: the two connected ones)'. (Maẓharī). Therefore, it was placed after Sūrah Al-Anfāl. This precaution was taken for the reason that, should it be a part of another Sūrah, it must stay with it. But, it was also probable that it may be a separate and independent Sūrah. Therefore, when writing, a particular format was adopted whereby some space was left open at the end of Sūrah Al-Anfāl and before the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah – similar to the spot meant for writing Bismillāh at the head of other Sūrahs.

The precise reason why Bismillāh was not written at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah or Al-Taubah has been reported from the great compiler of the revealed text of the Qur'an, Saiyyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه himself. At that time, he was answering a question posed by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the Saḥābī and Mufasssīr (exegete) of the Qur'an, which appears in Abū Dāwūd, An-Nasā'i, the Musnād of Aḥmad and Tirmidhī. In that question, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās had also asked Sayyidnā 'Uthmān about the order in which the Sūrahs of the Qur'an have been arranged. Giving an example, he pointed out that placed

first were the larger Sūrahs that have more than hundred verses. Technically, they are called مئتين (*mi'īn*: hundreds). After that, there are the large Sūrahs that have less than hundred verses. They are called مئاني (*mathānī*: the oft-repeated ones). Placed thereafter were smaller Sūrahs that are called مفضلات (*mufaṣṣalāt*: the Surahs starting from "Qāf" [50] to the end of the Qur'ān [114]). The order of this very arrangement necessitated that Sūrah Al-Taubah should be placed before Sūrah Al-Anfāl – because the verses carried by Sūrah Al-Taubah are more than one hundred while those of Sūrah Al-Anfāl are less than one hundred. The first seven long Sūrahs called سبع طوال (*sab' tiwal*: the seven long ones) also show that the placement of Sūrah Al-Taubah before Sūrah Al-Anfāl is naturally more appropriate there too. After having stated the existing position, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه asked about the consideration that had led to a contrary arrangement. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه said: 'Correct. But, the Qur'ān was serious matter. Precaution demanded that we do what we did – because, in case Sūrah Al-Taubah is not taken as an independent Sūrah, instead, is taken as a part of Sūrah Al-Anfāl, it will be obvious that the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl have been revealed earlier and those of Sūrah Al-Taubah after that. Given this situation, it is not permissible to give precedence to the verses of the latter over the verses of Sūrah Al-Anfāl without the sanction of *Waḥy* (revelation). And since we did not find any such instruction in the *Waḥy*, therefore, Sūrah Al-Anfāl was made to precede and Sūrah Al-Taubah, to succeed.'

From these precise details we learn that the reason for not writing Bismillāh at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah lies in the probability that Sūrah Al-Taubah may not be an independent Sūrah, instead, be a part of Sūrah Al-Anfāl. Given this probability, writing Bismillāh at this place shall be as incorrect as someone were to write Bismillāh in the middle of any Sūrah of the Qur'ān.

On this basis, Muslim jurists have said that a person who has already been reciting Sūrah Al-Anfāl from above and is going to begin Sūrah Al-Taubah, then, he or she should not recite *Bismillāh*. But, a person who is starting his or her *tilāwah* (recitation of the Qur'ān) from the beginning, or from somewhere in the middle, of this very Sūrah should say: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (*Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*) and then begin his or her recitation. Some people who do not know rules think

that the recitation of Bismillāh while reciting Sūrah Al-Taubah is not permissible under any condition. This is a mistaken notion. Then, they would make another mistake on top of that. Instead of reciting Bismillāh, they would recite: اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ النَّارِ (I seek the protection of Allah from the Fire) when initiating or beginning from it. For this, there is no proof from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions.

Then, there is the statement of Sayyidnā ‘Alī رضى الله عنه reported in a narrative from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه. It says, ‘the reason for not writing Bismillāh at the beginning of Sūrah Barā’ah (Al-Taubah) is that بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ (*Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*) is an assurance of protection, but in Sūrah Al-Barā’ah, this assurance of protection and the pledge of peace given to disbelievers has been terminated.’ This statement should be taken as a refinement of approach that does not go against the real cause. And the real cause is nothing but that Bismillāh was not written on the basis of the probability that Sūrah Al-Anfāl and Sūrah Al-Taubah may be one. Then, there could be yet another subtle point about why it was not written. This Sūrah proclaims freedom from any responsibility for the disbelievers and announces the withdrawal of peace and protection from those people – which is not fit for Bismillāh. Therefore, in terms of the design of creation, particular causes were generated here so that Bismillāh was not to be written at this place.

To understand the present verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah fully, it is necessary to know some events that became the cause of the revelation of these verses. Therefore, given here first are consolidated details of the relevant events:

1. As a whole, Sūrah Al-Taubah carries the description of some battles, events related to them, and many injunctions and rulings emerging therefrom – for example, the termination of pacts with all tribes of Arabia, the Conquest of Makkah, the battles of Ḥunain and Tabūk. Out of these events, first came the Conquest of Makkah in Hijrah year 8, then came the battle of Ḥunain in the same year, then the battle of Tabūk in Rajab of Hijrah year 9. Finally came the announcement terminating pacts with all tribes of Arabia in the month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah, Hijrah year 9.

2. A summary of subjects concerning the repudiation of treaties mentioned in these verses shows that it was in the Hijrah year 6 that

the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم started with the intention of 'Umrah but the Quraysh blocked their entry into Makkah. Then came the peace treaty between them at Hudaibiyah. The time frame of this treaty, as reported in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, was ten years. In Makkah, there were other tribes too, other than the Quraysh. An article was included in the peace treaty to cover them. It allowed a tribe, from out of the tribes other than the Quraysh, to become allies to the Quraysh and be with them, if they chose to do so; and whoever chose to become the ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and be with him was allowed to do that. So, the tribe of Khuza'ah chose to become an ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and went with him, while the tribe of Banū Bakr chose to go with the Quraysh. According to the treaty, it was necessary that within ten years there shall be no internecine war, nor shall any aggressor be helped from any side. And the tribe that was an ally of a party to the treaty shall be considered as governed by the same rule that governed the party. In other words, launching an attack on it or helping the aggressor was to be taken as a contravention of the treaty.

This treaty was signed in the Hijrah year 6. In Hijrah year 7, according to this treaty, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions left for Makkah to perform the 'Umrah they had missed earlier (*'Umrah al-qaḍā'*). After staying there for three days, he returned as stipulated in the treaty. Until then, no party had acted against the peace treaty in any way.

After that, it was within a period of five or six months when the tribe of Banū Bakr mounted a nightly ambush against the tribe of Banū Khuza'ah. Thinking that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was far away and things were happening during the night which would make it difficult for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to find out details of what had actually happened, the Quraysh too came to the assistance of Banū Bakr by providing weapons and men to them.

Events as they transpired and conditions as they prevailed made the Quraysh too accept that the treaty of peace entered into at Hudaibiyah – requiring a ten-year moratorium on internecine wars – was broken.

The tribe of Banū Khuza'ah, being an ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, informed him about this event. When he learnt about this breach of trust committed by the Quraysh, he started making secret

preparations for war against them.

During their encounters at Badr, 'Uḥud and Aḥzāb, the Quraysh had realized that some unseen Divine power was at work in favor of Muslims. They were no more intoxicated with their muscle and might. Now that they had broken their solemn pledge, the danger of a war likely to be initiated by Muslims had become all too obvious to them. The likelihood became much stronger after the report of their breach of trust reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he chose to observe a total silence about the matter. Left with no choice, they asked Abū Sufyān to go to Madīnah personally, assess the situation there and should he sense a war action being initiated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he should offer his apologies on what had happened in the past and have the treaty renewed for the future.

When Abū Sufyān reached Madīnah, he did notice some indicators of war preparations being made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This increased his concerns. He went out to see prominent Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم one by one so that they would recommend his case and help him have the treaty renewed. But, all of them refused to do so in view of their unpleasant past and present dealings. Consequently, Abū Sufyān returned empty-handed. The Quraysh of Makkah were hit by panic.

At the other end, as reported in Bidāyah and Ibn Kathīr, it was on Ramaḍān 10, Hijrah year 8 when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم marched out from Madīnah with a large force of his noble Companions in order to attack Makkah. Ultimately, Makkah was conquered.

Conquest of Makkah: Vanquished enemies were treated nobly

At the time of the Conquest, there were many Quraysh chiefs who believed in the veracity of Islām earlier too, but they could not express themselves freely due to peer pressure in the society. Now that they had their opportunity, they embraced Islām. As for those who chose to stick to their time-worn creed of disbelief even at that hour, they too – with the exception of some individuals – were granted amnesty by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was an unusual demonstration of morals, prophetic and miraculous, something others could not even dream of. He ignored all their hostilities and injustices in the past and simply said: 'Today, I say to you exactly what was said by Yusuf عليه السلام to his brothers at the time when they had reached him in Egypt with their

parents: لَا تَتْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (This day, there is no blame on you).’ It means that, for him, taking a revenge for the past injustices inflicted by them or seeking to punish them in some way was unimaginable, in fact, he did not consider it appropriate even to blame them for anything that happened in the past.

Rules for four kinds of Mushriks at the time of the Conquest of Makkah

So then, Makkah came under the control of Muslims. Non-Muslims living in and around Makkah were given full protection of their lives and properties. But, that was a time when the existing status of these non-Muslims was different. One kind of people among them was of those who were a party to the peace treaty of Ḥudaibiyah which they themselves broke and which by itself became the cause of the Conquest of Makkah. Then, there was another set of people with whom a peace treaty was signed for a specified period of time and they continued abiding by this treaty, such as the two tribes of Banū Kinānah called Banū Ḍamurah and Banū Mudlaj. The peace treaty with them was for a specified period of time and, at the time of the revelation of Sūrah Al-Barā’ah (Al-Taubah) as stated by Khāzin, they had another nine months left for their period of treaty to expire.

Thirdly, there were people with whom a peace treaty was concluded without any set time limit. Fourthly, there were those with whom no treaty existed.

The unsavory experience of all treaties entered into by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with disbelievers or the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) was that they flouted these openly and secretly always conspiring with enemies to hurt him and his Muslim adherents as much as they could. Therefore, led by his own long experience and Divinely inspired indicators, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had made up his mind not to enter into any peace treaty with any of these people and that the Arabian Peninsula was to be particularized with Muslims only as a bastion of Islām. This required a proclamation soon after the takeover of Makkah and the Arabian Peninsula ordering non-Muslims to leave and go somewhere else. But, in view of Islām’s principle of justice, equity and humane dealing as well as under the universal mercy of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself, doing something like that without allowing a suitable time limit was not considered appropriate.

Therefore, at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah (Al-Taubah), separate injunctions were revealed that covered the four kinds of non-Muslim groups.

The first such group was that of the Quraysh of Makkah who had themselves broken the treaty of Hudaibiyah. Now, they deserved no extra respite. But, since this was the period of 'sacred months' during which fighting and killing was forbidden by Allah, therefore, the injunction which covers them appears in the fifth verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah, that is, *فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ* (So, when the sacred months expire, kill the Mushriks wherever you find them. And catch them and besiege them and sit in ambush for them everywhere. Then, if they repent and establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh*, leave their way. Surely, Allah is most Forgiving, Very Merciful - 9:5). It means that they had, though, forfeited all their rights by breaking the treaty obligations, but observing the sanctity of the 'sacred months' was after all necessary, therefore, they should either leave the Arabian Peninsula soon after the 'sacred months' expire, or embrace Islām, or be prepared to face war.

Then, there was the second group with whom a peace treaty was made for a specified period of time and they had abided by it. The injunction about them was given in the fourth verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ
أَحَدًا فَلَا تَمُوتُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدُهُمْ إِلَىٰ مَدَّتِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Except those of the Mushriks with whom you have a treaty, and they have abated nothing of your rights and backed no one against you, so then, fulfill the treaty with them up to their term. Surely, Allah loves the God-fearing - (9:4).

This injunction pertained to Banū Ḍamurah and Banū Mudlaj as a result of which they were allowed a respite of nine months.

As for the third and the fourth group, only one injunction was revealed to cover both. It has been mentioned in the first and the second verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah as follows:

بَرَاءَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۚ فَسَبِّحُوا فِي
الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْزِي الْكَافِرِينَ

Here is a withdrawal [proclaimed] by Allah and His Messen-

ger against those of the Mushriks with whom you have a treaty. So, move in the land freely for four months, and be sure that you can never defeat Allah and that Allah is about to disgrace the disbelievers – (9: 1,2).

Thus, according to the first two verses, all those who were covered by some treaty without a fixed time limit, or those with whom there was no treaty, were allowed a respite of four months.

And according to the fourth verse, those who had a treaty for a specified period of time received a respite until it expired and, according to the fifth verse, the Mushriks of Makkah got their respite until the 'sacred months' expired.

The generosity of giving respite to disbelievers even after treaties with them had expired

It was stipulated that these injunctions shall come into force and the period of respite shall start from the time the relevant information has been promulgated throughout the Arabian Peninsula. According to the arrangement made for this purpose, the public proclamation was to be made in the great gathering of the Hajj of the Hijrah year 9 at Minā and 'Arafāt. This finds mention in the third and fourth verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah as follows:

وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ
وَرَسُولُهُ فَإِنْ تُبْتِمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ،
وَنَشِيرُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ .

And here is an announcement, from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater Hajj, that Allah is free from [any commitment to] the Mushriks, and so is His Messenger. Now, if you repent, it is good for you. And if you turn away, then be sure that you can never defeat Allah. And give those who disbelieve the 'good' news of a painful punishment – (9:3,4).

When abrogating a treaty with disbelievers, taking any action against them without prior public announcement is not correct

So, in order to implement this Divine injunction, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنهما to the Hajj of the Hijrah year 9 at Makkah al-Mukarramah and had

them make this proclamation before a gathering of all tribes of Arabia on the plains of ‘Arafāt and Minā. It was all too obvious that this injunction would become widely known through the medium of that great gathering all over Arabia. However, as a matter of added precaution, he had this proclamation particularly made in distant Yemen through Sayyidnā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه.

After this public proclamation, the situation was that the first group, that is, the disbelievers of Makkah had to leave the limits of the state by the end of the ‘sacred months,’ that is, the end of the month of Muḥarram of the Hijrah year 10. Similarly, the deadline for the second group was Ramaḍān of the Hijrah year 10; and that of the third and fourth groups was the tenth of Rabī’ ath-Thānī of the Hijrah year 10. Any contravention of this executive order would have rendered the offender liable to face an armed confrontation. Under this arrangement, by the time of Ḥajj next year, no disbeliever was to remain within state limits. This will appear in verse 28 of Sūrah Al-Taubah where it has been said: *فَلَا يَفْرُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا* (so, let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥaram* after this year of theirs). And the saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Ḥadīth: لا يحجّن بعد العام مشرك (The disbelievers shall not perform Ḥajj after this year) means precisely this.

Up to this point, given here was an explanation of the first verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah in the light of corresponding events. Now, some relevant point that emerge from these verses are being discussed below.

What do these five verses teach?

1. First of all, soon after the Conquest of Makkah, the general amnesty granted by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to the Quraysh of Makkah, and to other enemy tribes, taught Muslims a practical lesson in high morals. The lesson was: if they overpower an enemy who stands helpless before them, they should not seek revenge from that enemy for his past hostilities. Rather than do something like that, they should actually demonstrate the best of Islāmic morals by being generous and forgiving to their enemies. Though, acting in this manner may require a certain trampling over their natural feelings, still such a conduct is full of great advantages.

(A) To begin with, it can be said that revenge does help one take out anger, at least temporarily – which may even give one a sense of

personal relief – yet, this sense of relief or comfort is transitory. Then, as compared with it, the pleasure of Allah Ta‘ālā and the high ranks of Paradise one is going to get are far more and are for ever in all respects. Consequently, reason demands that one should prefer what is everlasting to what is temporary.

(B) Then, there is this act of suppressing one’s angry emotions after having overpowered the enemy. This clearly proves that the battle fought by these people had no selfish motive behind it. The only motive they had was fighting in the way of Allah – and this great objective is what draws the decisive line between the Jihād of Islām and the wars of common kings and rulers of the world, and what also lays bare the difference in Jihād and rotten aggression. Thus, the truth is that a war waged for Allah to implement His injunctions shall be what Jihād is, otherwise it shall remain a high-handed exercise in disorder.

(C) The third benefit yielded by this conduct comes naturally. When the overpowered enemy observes the high morals of the victors, he is likely to be drawn towards Islām and Muslims, something which is bound to lead him on to the path of his own success in life – and this is the real objective of Jihād.

Forgiving disbelievers never means lack of vigilance against any impending harm from them

2. The second ruling which has been deduced from these verses is that forgiveness and generosity do not mean that one should become negligent about self-protection against the evil designs of enemies by giving them free rein to go ahead and keep causing loss and injury to their forgivers. No doubt, forgiveness and generosity are in order, but along with these, commonsense demands that one should take lesson from past experience and restructure the pattern of life ahead by blocking all holes and crevices through which one could come within the range of enemy hostility. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: لا يلدغ المرء من جحر واحد مرتين (One is not bitten twice from the same hole) meaning that a person does not put his hand twice in the same hole from which a poisonous reptile had bitten him.

The Qur’ānic proclamation of the withdrawal of Hijrah year 9 and the ensuing instructions given to the Mushriks that they should vacate the environs of the Sacred Mosque peacefully within the period of respite allowed are proofs of this wise strategy.

3. The initial verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah also tell us that forcing weak people to leave a place without reasonable notice of evacuation, or attacking them without warning is cowardly, and very ignoble indeed. Whenever such an action has to be taken, it is necessary to make a public announcement first so that the affected people, who do not accept the law of the land, may get the time to go wherever they wished, freely and conveniently. This becomes clear through the general proclamation of the Hijrah year 9 as mentioned in the cited verses and as demonstrated by the legal respite granted to all affected groups.

4. The fourth ruling emerging from the cited verses tells us that, in case there is the need to annul a treaty of peace already made – which is permitted subject to some conditions – it is far better to allow the treaty to remain valid until it expires automatically. This has been commanded in the fourth verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah where Muslims were required to fulfill their treaty obligations to the tribes of Banū Damurah and Banū Mudlaj for the remaining nine months.

5. The fifth ruling from the cited verses tells us about the standard Muslim attitude towards the enemies of Islām. When confronted with enemies, Muslims should always keep in mind that they are no enemy to them personally. The truth of the matter is that they are opposed to their disbelief, which is actually the cause of their own loss in the present world as well as in the Hereafter. As for the opposition of Muslims to them, that too is really based on good wishes for them. Therefore, Muslims should never abandon the opportunity to give good counsel to them, whether in war or peace. This theme appears in these verses repeatedly. It promises real prosperity for them in this world and in the world to come, only if they were to rescind their thinking. The text does not leave it at that. It also warns them of the consequences: if they refused to repent and correct, they would not only be destroyed and killed in the present world but, they would also not escape their punishment even after death. It is interesting that, along with the proclamation of withdrawal in these verses, the strain of sympathetic insistence also continues.

6. The sixth ruling comes out from the fourth verse where Muslims have been prompted to fulfill their pledge right through the end until the term of the peace treaty expired. Immediately thereafter, the verse has been concluded with the sentence: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ** (Surely, Allah loves

the God-fearing). This gives a clear hint to the advice that Muslims should observe utmost precaution in fulfilling the pledge they have given. They should never look for lame excuses and far-fetched interpretations only to find a way to contravene treaty obligations, as done by nations at large.

7. Details as they appear in the fifth verse carry the seventh ruling. When war in defense of a correct objective breaks out against any power, all available combat resources should be used fully and conclusively. That is a time when showing mercy and appeasement would be showing cowardice.

From the same fifth verse comes the eighth ruling, that is, trust in a non-Muslim who has become a Muslim depends on three things. (A) Taubah (repentance) over disbelief in the past, (B) the establishing of Ṣalāh and (C) the paying of Zakāh as due. Until these three conditions have been implemented practically, the option of war will not be withdrawn simply on the basis that someone has recited the Kalimah of Islām. When after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, some people refused to pay Zakāh, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه had declared a Jihād against them. On that occasion, by referring to this very verse in support of his action, he was able to convince and satisfy all Companions.

8. The ninth question in these verses concerns the meaning of the expression: *يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ* (*yaumu 'l-ḥajju 'l-akbar*: The day of the great ḥajj). The sayings of early commentators differ in this matter. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās, Sayyidnā ‘Umar, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar, and Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنهم اجمعين say that ‘the day of the greater ḥajj’ means ‘the day of ‘Arafah’ because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: *الحج عرفة* (‘Arafah is the Ḥajj). (Abu Dāwūd, Tirmidhī)

9. Some others have said that it signifies: *يَوْمَ النَّحْرِ* (*yaumu 'n-naḥr*: the day of sacrifice), that is, the tenth of Dhu al-ḥijjah. In order to accommodate all these sayings, Sufyān ath-Thawrī and other authorities have said that all five days of the Ḥajj are the substantiation of: *يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ* (*yaumu 'l-ḥajju 'l-akbar*: the day of the greater ḥajj) which includes ‘Arafah and *Yaumu 'n-naḥr* both. As for the use of the word *yaum* or day in the singular, it is in accordance with the usage elsewhere – as the Holy Qur’ān calls a few days of the battle of Badr by

the name of يوم الفرقان: *yaumu 'l-Furqān* in the singular form. Then, there are the common wars of Arabia. They too are identified by the word *yaum* or day – even though, they may have been spread over many more days – such as, يوم البعث: *yaumu 'l-bu'āth*, يوم الاحد: *yaumu l'Uḥūd* etc. And since 'Umrah is called 'the smaller *hajj*, (حج اصغر), therefore, it was to make it distinct that Hajj was called 'the greater *hajj*' (*al-hajju 'l-akbar*). This tells us that, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, Hajj as it takes place every year is nothing but 'the greater *hajj*' (*al-hajju 'l-akbar*). As for the popular assumption that the year in which 'Arafah falls on a Friday is specially 'the greater *hajj*, it has no real basis except that the year in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performed his last Hajj (حجة الوداع: *hajjatu 'l-wadā'*) just happened to be the year in which 'Arafah fell on the day of Jumu'ah. No doubt, this is a matter of distinction in its own place, but it has nothing to do with the sense of this verse.

In his *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣaṣ has said: By calling the days of Hajj as 'the greater *hajj*, the problem that 'Umrah cannot be performed during the days of Hajj has also been resolved here – because, the Holy Qur'ān has specified these days for 'the greater *hajj*.'

Verses 6 – 11

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ
اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦﴾ كَيْفَ
يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَعِندَ رَسُولِهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ
عَاهَدْتُمْ عِندَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا
لَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٧﴾ كَيْفَ وَإِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا
يَرْقُبُوا فِيكُمْ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً ۚ يُرْضُونَكُمْ بِأَفْوَهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَى
قُلُوبُهُمْ ۚ وَكَثَرُهُمْ فُسْقُونَ ﴿٨﴾ اشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا
فَصَدَّوْا عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩﴾ لَا
يَرْقُبُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي
الدِّينِ ۖ وَنَفَصِلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

And if any one of the Mushriks seeks your protection, give him protection until he listens to the Word of Allah, then let him reach his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know. [6]

How can the Mushriks have a treaty with Allah and His Messenger? Except those with whom you made a treaty near *Al-masjid-al-harām*. Then, as long as they remain straight with you, remain straight with them. Surely, Allah loves the God-fearing. [7]

How (can they have a treaty) while if they overcome you, they shall not observe any bond or treaty in your case. They want to please you with (words from) their mouths, but their hearts refuse. Most of them are sinners. [8]

They have taken a paltry price for the verses of Allah, so they have prevented (people) from His path. Indeed, evil is what they have been doing. [9]

They do not observe, in the case of a believer, any bond or treaty. And they are the transgressors. [10]

Then, if they repent and establish *Ṣalāh* and pay *Zakāh*, they are your brothers in faith. And We elaborate the verses for people who understand. [11]

Commentary

It was said in the first five verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah that, soon after the Conquest of Makkah, general amnesty was granted to all polytheists and disbelievers of Makkah and its environs. But, in view of their dismal record of treachery and breach of trust in the past, it was decided that no treaty would be signed with them in the future. It was despite this policy decision that injunctions to honor the treaty – made with these people earlier and which they had never contravened – were revealed whereby they were required to fulfill the terms of the treaty until it expired. As for those with whom there was just no treaty, or there was no treaty with a fixed duration, they too were granted suitable concession. Rather than they be ordered to leave Makkah immediately, they were allowed a respite of four months so that, during

this period of time, they could arrange to leave Makkah and go wherever they deemed fit, with convenience and in peace. Or, if the truth of Islām had become apparent to them in the meantime, they were welcome to become Muslims. The outcome of these injunctions was that the sacred site of Makkah was to be vacated by all treacherous disbelievers. The evacuation was being implemented without any intention to retaliate. In fact, it was enforced in self-defense because of consistent experience. Therefore, the door to a good future for them was left open even then. This has been mentioned in the sixth verse the substance of which is: If someone from among the disbelievers seeks asylum with you, then, you should grant it so that he could come close to you and listen to the Word of Allah and understand the veracity of Islām. Then, your responsibility does not end at granting him a temporary asylum. The truth of the matter is that, as soon as he has done what he had come for, it is the responsibility of Muslims that they should escort him under full protective arrangements to the place where he considers himself safe and happy. At the end of the verse, it was said that the particular injunction has been sent because these people are not sufficiently aware. By coming close, they could know things better.

Some rulings and points of guidance come out from this verse (11) as well. These have been discussed in details by Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ. In brief, they are:

Proving the Veracity of Islām is the Duty of Muslim Scholars

1. First of all, this verse confirms that, in case, a disbeliever asks Muslims to explain the veracity of Islām to him with valid proofs, then, it becomes their duty to accede to his demand.

2. Secondly, it is obligatory on Muslims that they should allow and protect anyone who comes to them to learn more about Islām. Causing any hurt or harm to such a person is not permissible. This injunction, according to Tafsīr al-Qurtubī, is operative only in a situation when the purpose of the visitor is to listen to the Word of Allah and know more about Islām. In case, the objective of the visitor is business, or some other pursuit, it would depend on the discretion of relevant Muslim officials who would decide in terms of what is best in Muslim interests. Should they deem it fit, they may permit and should they think otherwise, they can act at their discretion.

Non-Resident Non-Muslims should not be permitted to stay in Dār al-Islām any longer than necessary

3. The third ruling stipulates that a non-Muslim at war, with whom Muslims have no treaty, should not be allowed to stay any longer than necessary – because, in the cited verse, a limit of stay and protection has been set by saying: **حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ** (until he listens to the Word of Allah).

4. According to the fourth element of guidance embedded here, it is the duty of a Muslim ruling authority to remain aware of the progress of the mission undertaken by any non-Muslim at war once he has entered into the Muslim country with valid permission (visa) and purpose. And, as soon as he has completed his job in the country, it is also the duty of Muslim *Amīr* (ruler) that he should arrange for his safe return.

Stated in the next four verses (7-10) is the wisdom behind the proclamation of withdrawal mentioned in the initial verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah. Here, by referring to the inherent meanness of pledge-breaking disbelievers whose malice and hostility against Muslims knew no bounds, it was advised in verses 7 and 8 that entertaining any hope from such people that they would ever abide by their pledge was simply wrong to begin with. It was said in the text: Except for some people with whom Muslims had entered into a treaty near the *masjid al-ḥarām*, how could any pledge given by these disbelievers be credible before Allah and His Messenger? The fact was that they were a set of people who, if given the least opportunity, would not blink about any relationship they had with them or bother to honor the word of promise given by them. The simple reason was that these people had no intention of honoring the treaty even when they were signing it. Their sole purpose was just to placate them. With their hearts set elsewhere, most of them were sinners, compulsive breakers of pledges and practitioners of treachery.

Uphold truth and commit no excess or injustice even against disbelievers is the teaching of Qur'ān

This statement of the Qur'ān provides guidance for Muslims that they should never surrender truth and justice even when they are dealing with confronting enemies. Whenever they have to take up an

issue with them, they are required not to slip into taking exaggerated approaches and stances against them. This is as it has been demonstrated in these verses where full consideration has been given to the case of the disbelievers of Makkah. The fact was that most of them had broken their pledge. Naturally, when something like this happens in that setting, people tend to make a sweeping allegation against everyone. But, the Holy Qur'an, by saying: *إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ* (except those with whom you made a treaty near *al-masjid-al-haram*), has exempted those who had not broken their pledge. In fact, it has ordered that Muslims should stay firm on their commitment as long as the others remain committed and faithful to their pledge. The breach of trust committed by other people should in no case influence their stance whereby they themselves may be led to become breakers of the pledge given to them.

Earlier when it was said that disbelieving people had nursed betrayal in their hearts right from the beginning and had no intention of staying faithful to their pledge, an exception was also granted. Similarly, when the text says: *أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ* (Most of them are sinners – 8), it hints that all of them were not like that. There were some nice people among them too, who wanted to stand by their commitment, but they were not heard before others.

This is the same subject the Holy Qur'an takes up elsewhere saying in very clear terms: *لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا* (and malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice – 5:8)

After that comes the ninth verse with the reason why these Mushriks were so chronically treacherous and what was it that ailed them. Thus, they too were given a prescription of hope to ponder about so that they could still correct themselves if they chose to. At the same time, Muslims at large were also served with a warning that they should take their guard against the pitfall of treachery and disobedience which had sucked these people in and make a total abstention from this behavior model their distinct life style. The reason is their relentless love of the material. The desire to acquire, possess and expend the limitless range of things of this world had blinded them to the limit that they would not hesitate to sell off the very Words of Allah and their own faith in exchange for paltry gains. This character is, to make an understatement, evil.

Moving on to the tenth verse, the text describes the extreme crookedness of these people by saying: لَا يَرْقُبُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَلًا ذِمَّةً (They do not observe, in the case of a believer, any bond or treaty). The sense is that this was no isolated case of disbelieving people acting treacherously against Muslims to whom they were bound by ties of kinship and treaty obligations. In fact, disbelieving people were a lot who would never consider kinship or pledge as valid grounds when dealing with Muslims.

Given the aforesaid behavior pattern of disbelieving people, it could have been but natural for Muslims to have become disillusioned with them forever and refuse to have any brotherly relationship with them under any condition. Therefore, as the Qur'ānic justice and equity would have it, the eleventh verse gives the following instruction: فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخِوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ (Then, if they repent and establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakaḥ*, they are your brothers in faith).

Here we are being told that once an enemy – no matter how deadly and no matter how hurtful he has been – becomes a Muslim, things change dramatically. Allah Ta'ālā forgives his past sins, all of them. So, it becomes obligatory on Muslims too that they should forget the past, start afresh, take them as their brothers in faith and do whatever it takes to fulfill the rights enjoined under such relationship.

Three Conditions of Entry into the Islāmic Brotherhood

This verse makes it clear that there are three conditions of entry into the Islāmic brotherhood: (1) Taubah or repentance from Kufr and Shirk, (2) establishment of *Ṣalāh* and (3) payment of *Zakāh* – because, 'Imān (faith) and Taubah (repentance) are concealed matters. Common Muslims cannot find out their reality. Therefore, two of their outward signs were mentioned, that is, *Ṣalāh* and *Zakāh*.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: 'This verse has made the blood of Muslims, who qualify as 'the people of Qiblah,' unlawful (*ḥarām*). In other words, people who establish *Ṣalāh*, pay *Zakāh* and have said or done nothing against Islām as proved against them, shall be taken as Muslims in the matter of all religious injunctions – even though, they may not have true 'Imān (faith) in their hearts, or have hypocrisy (*nifāq*).

This is the verse Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه had quoted in sup-

port of his declaration of Jihād against those who had refused to pay Zakāh after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The noble Companions before whom he had made this assertion were satisfied with his approach. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of verse 11, the text stresses upon the need to abide by given injunctions, regarding those covered under a treaty and those who have repented, by saying: *وَنُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ* (And We elaborate the verses for people who understand).

Verses 12 - 16

وَإِنْ تَكْثُرُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ
فَقَاتِلُوا أَيْمَةَ الْكُفْرِ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ لَا إِيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ ﴿١٢﴾
أَلَا تُقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَثُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ وَهُمْ يُبَاخِرُ الرُّسُولَ وَهُمْ
بَدَءُكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۖ أَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ ۚ قَالَ لَهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ إِنْ
كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ
وَيَنْصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَيَذْهَبِ
غَيْظُ قُلُوبِهِمْ ۖ وَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ
حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾ أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ
جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِجَنَّةٍ ۖ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

And if they break their oaths after they have made a covenant and speak evil of your Faith, then fight the leaders of infidelity – in fact, they have no oaths – so that they may stop. [12] Would you not fight a people who broke their oaths and conspired to expel the Messenger and it was they who started (fighting) against you for the first time? Do you fear them? Then, Allah is worthier that you fear Him, if you are believers. [13]

Fight them, so that Allah should punish them at your hands and disgrace them, and help you win against them and bring relief to bosoms of a believing people, [14] and remove the rage of their hearts. And Allah relents to whomsoever He wills. And Allah is (All-) Know-

ing, (All-) Wise. [15]

Do you think that you will be left alone while Allah has not yet seen those of you who struggle in *jihād* and never take anyone, other than Allah and His Messenger and the believers, as their confidant? And Allah is (All-) Aware of what you do. [16]

Commentary

It will be recalled that a cease-fire agreement with the Quraysh of Makkah was concluded at Hudaibiyah in the Hijrah year 6. That the Quraysh will not stick to the agreement was foretold in verse 7 of Sūrah Al-Taubah: **كَيْفَ يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ** (how can the Mushriks have a treaty...). Then, came verses 8, 9 and 10 with the causes of their pledge breaking. And in the 11th verse it was announced that, despite having broken their solemn covenant, if these Mushriks become Muslims and start expressing their faith in Islām through prayers and fasting, then, Muslims are duty-bound to keep their present dealings with them free of any effects from the past. In fact, they should take them to be their brothers in faith and treat them as such. In verse 12 cited above, Muslims have been told about the course of action they should take in the event these people do break their pledge, as prophesied earlier.

The actual words of the text read: **وَأِنْ تَكَفَرُوا بِمَا أَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ** (And if they break their oaths after they have made a covenant and speak evil of your Faith, then fight the leaders of infidelity – 12). It is worth noting that the present situation in the text demanded the use of **فَقَاتِلُوهُمْ** (*faqātilūhum*: then fight them). The Holy Qur'an has said: **فَقَاتِلُوا أَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ** (then fight the leaders of infidelity) which bypasses the use of a shorter pronoun at this place. The word: **أَئِمَّةَ** (*a'immaḥ*: leaders) is the plural of Imām. The sense is that these people by breaking their word of honor turned into leaders of infidelity and thus became deserving of a war against them. This statement also carries the wisdom and justification of the command to fight. Some commentators say that 'leaders of infidelity' at this place refers to the chiefs of the tribe of Quraysh in Makkah who kept on instigating people against Muslims and remained busy making war preparations. Fighting against them was particularly mentioned because these people were the real source of power the Makkans were credited with. In addition to that, since they were the ones with whom Muslims had bonds of close kinship, there was the possible apprehension that some conces-

sion could be granted in their case.

Honest critical study of Islām by Protected Non-Muslim Citizens of Dār al-Islām is possible – vilification is not

Some commentators have interpreted the words: **طَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ** (speak evil of your faith) to mean that speaking evil of the Faith of Muslims is included under contravention of pledge. A person who speaks evil of Islām and the Shari'ah of Islām cannot continue to be a party to the treaty with Muslims. But, according to a consensus of Muslim jurists, it means vilification that is done to insult and belittle Islām and Muslims, openly and publicly. Honest intellectual criticism while conducting research into problems and rulings remains exempt from its purview – then, it is not supposed to be vilification in its lexical sense.

Therefore, for non-Muslim citizens of Dār al-Islām, any honest intellectual criticism can be allowed, but what cannot be allowed is vilification, contempt, insult or outrage against Islām.

In the same verse (12), it was said: **إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ** (in fact, they have no oaths). The sense is that these are the kind of people none of whose oaths are trustworthy – because, they are addicted to breaking their oaths and committing breaches of trust. Then, the use of the plural form of oaths here could also mean: 'when they broke their oath, they also absolved Muslims of any responsibility for their oath and pledge.'

At the end of verse 12, it was said: **لَعَلَّكُمْ يَتَّقُونَ** (so that they may stop). This last sentence tells us that the objective of Jihād carried out by Muslims should never be the conquest of countries like common kings or to hurt the enemy and to take vengeance as belligerent people around the world would love to do. Instead of doing anything like that, when it comes to fighting that they must, the driving objective should be compassion for the enemy, the empathy and the desire that they would stop doing what was not right.

After that, to persuade Muslims to fight, they were told in verse 13 that there was no reason why they would not be ready to fight against the kind of people who had conspired to expel the Messenger of Allah. This refers to the Jews of Madīnah who had hatched a plan to expel the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from the city of Madīnah. They had said: **لِيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ** (the one having more honor and power will cer-

tainly expel the one being humble and weak from there – 63:8). In their self-view, they were the people of honor and power while Muslims were weak and lowly. The answer they needed was given by Allah Almighty in His way. He took their proud statement as it was and made it come true in a manner that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions, by turning the Jews out of Madīnah, proved that honor belonged to Muslims and disgrace to Jews.

Giving the second reason for fighting against them, it was said: **وَهُمْ** **بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ** (and it was they who started [fighting] against you for the first time). The sense is that they were the aggressors. What Muslims have to do now is simply to defend themselves, an action universally sane and normal.

Then, to remove the awe of the enemy from the hearts of Muslims, it was said: **أَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَكْبَرُ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ** (Do you fear them? Then, Allah is worthier that you fear Him) for there is no power that can cause His punishment to disappear. Finally, by saying: **إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ** (if you are believers), it was made clear that fearing anyone or anything other than Allah in a manner that obstructs the fulfillment of the injunctions of the Shari'ah of Islām is not what a true believing-practicing Muslim would do.

For Muslims, the same exhortation to fight in Jihād appears in verses 14 and 15 as well, though from a different angle. They were told:

1. If you get ready to fight them, the help and support from Allah will be with you. As for their enemies, they have already become deserving of Divine punishment because of their evil deeds but this punishment will not come down upon them from the heavens or up from beneath the Earth. Instead of that, says the verse: **يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ** that is, 'Allah shall punish them at their hands.'

2. As a result of this fighting, Allah Ta'ālā will mollify the hearts of Muslims after all those pains and sorrows continuously inflicted upon them by the disbelievers.

3. Then, the anger which filled Muslim hearts because of their treachery and pledge breaking was to be removed by Allah Ta'ālā when He punishes them at their hands.

In the previous verse (12), by saying: **لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ** (so that they may stop), Muslims were told that they should not fight a people just to re-

lease their anger, rather make their correction and betterment the main purpose of their action. When they cleanse their intention from all irrelevant shades, and let it be for Allah alone, and fight for none but Allah, then, Allah Ta'ālā shall cause things to unfold in a manner that automatically removes the feelings of anger and sorrow raging in their hearts.

4. Finally, it was said: وَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ (And Allah relents to whomsoever He wills -15). This tells us that there will be an added gain as a result of this Jihād. There will be many from among the enemies who will have the *taufīq* of Islām. They will become Muslims. So, there were many arrogant ones at the time of the Conquest of Makkah who were put to disgrace while there were many others who embraced Islām.

History proves that the circumstances and events predicted in these verses were witnessed one by one as pointed out by the Holy Qur'an. Therefore, these verses contain many miracles.

Verses 17 - 18

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ شَاهِدِينَ عَلَى
 أَنْفُسِهِمْ بِالْكَفْرِ أُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ وَفِي النَّارِ هُمْ
 خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
 الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَحْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَى
 أُولَئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

It is not for the Mushriks to build up the mosques of Allah while they are witnesses of their own infidelity. Those are the ones whose deeds have gone waste. And in the Fire they shall remain for ever. [17]

In fact, the mosques of Allah are built-up only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and those who establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakaḥ* and who fear none but Allah. So, it is in all likelihood that they are to be among those on the right path. [18]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how crooked the Mushriks of Makkah were, how they broke their pledges and what they did to de-

fend their false ways in religion. With this in view, Muslims were also brought around to stand up against them. In the last previous verse (16), Muslims have been told that Jihād is a test for them. This test is necessary because it helps in marking out a sincere Muslim from hypocrites and the weak-in-faith. Says the verse: 'Do you think that you will be left alone while Allah has not seen those of you who struggle in *jihād* and never take anyone, other than Allah and His Messenger and the believers, as their confidant?'

The address in this verse is also to those common people who were taken to be Muslims, though some of them were hypocrites while some others were weak in faith and kept wavering. Such people would pass on sensitive information about Muslims to their non-Muslim friends. Therefore, two signs of a sincere Muslim were identified in this verse.

Two signs of sincere Muslims

- (1) They fight disbelievers in the way of Allah.
- (2) They take no non-Muslim as their close friend to whom secrets are confided.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (And Allah is [All] Aware of what you do) that is, before Him nobody can get away with false excuses and alibis.

This wisdom of Jihād mentioned earlier has appeared in another verse of the Holy Qur'an in the following words: أَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا 'آمَنَّا' وَأَنْ لَا يُفْتَنُوا (Do people think that they will be left to say, "We believe," and they will not be tried? – 29:2)

On taking non-Muslims as close friends and insiders

The word: وليجة (*walijah*) used in verse 16 means an insider who shares secrets. There is another verse which uses the word: بطانة (*biṭānah*) to carry this very sense. Literally, 'biṭānah' means what is worn under normal clothing and is close to the body. It denotes a person who knows secrets as an insider. The actual words of the verse read: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا بَطَانَةً مِنْ دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَاءً (O those who believe, do not take anyone as insider but from your own selves for they would spare no effort to put you in trouble). (3:118)

Now we can turn to the present verses (17 and 18) where instructions have been given to cleanse *al-masjid-al-ḥarām* and other *masājid*

(mosques) of false modes of worship and replacing them with what is correct and acceptable.

A little background detail is in order at this point. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم got rid of all those idols the Mushriks used to worship from the Baytullah and the Sacred Mosque soon after the conquest of Makkah, it was a matter of relief, at least externally, for the Sacred Mosque was now free from the physical vestiges of Shirk. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had granted his old enemies pardon and protection soon after they were overpowered. They still used to do their 'Ibādah and Ṭawāf in the Sacred Mosque following their false ways.

That the Sacred Mosque was cleansed of idols was good, but it was also necessary to purify this sacred site from the fallout of idolatry and its false mores. The only way it could be done was to prohibit the entry of the Mushriks into the Sacred Mosque. But, this would have gone against the promise of protection given to them – and abiding by the terms of a treaty was far more important in Islām. Therefore, such orders were not given immediately. Instead, it was done in the year next to the conquest of Makkah. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه make an announcement in the great gathering of Mina and 'Arafāt that, in the future, no 'Ibādah, Ḥajj or Ṭawāf performed in the Mushrik way will be allowed in the Sacred Mosque. Also prohibited through this announcement was the evil custom of making Ṭawāf in the nude that had lingered from the days of Jāhiliyah. It was in the gathering at Mina that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه proclaimed:

لَا يَحْجُجَنَّ بَعْدَ الْعَامِ مُشْرِكٌ وَلَا يَطُوفَنَّ بِالْبَيْتِ عُرْيَانٌ

After this year, no Mushrik will perform Ḥajj and no naked person will make Ṭawāf of Baytullah.

And this respite of one year was given for the reason that there were many people among them with whom Muslims had a treaty and they had continued to abide by the terms of the treaty. That they should be made to obey a new law before the expiry of the existing treaty with them was contrary to Islāmic policy of tolerance. Therefore, a public announcement was made a year in advance to the effect that it has been decided to cleanse the Sacred Mosque from all Mush-

rik customs and ways of worship – because, their kind of worship would not let a mosque flourish, rather would go on to make it desolate.

These Mushriks of Makkah equated their pagan customs with ‘worship’ and thought that they were contributing towards the maintenance and functional thriving of the Sacred Mosque. They were proud of being the custodians of the Baytullah and the Sacred Mosque. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه says, ‘when his father, before he became a Muslim, was taken prisoner at the battle of Badr, Muslims reproached him for staying on the side of Kufr and Shirk. He told them, ‘you only remember what is bad about us. You do not like to talk about our good things. Do you not know that we are the custodians of the Sacred Mosque? We take care of the building. We keep it filled with people. We manage it and we run a drinking water service for the pilgrims. Revealed thereupon were the verses: مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ (It is not for the Mushriks to build up the mosques of Allah). It means that Mushriks (those who ascribe partners to Allah) do not have the right to build and populate the mosques of Allah. The reason is that a *masjid* is a place that has been built to worship One God while Shirk and Kufr are its antithesis that cannot be combined with the structure and function of a *masjid*.

The word: عمارة (*imārah*: building) appearing in this verse is a multifaceted word and is used to convey several meanings. It could mean the physical building of the *masjid* including all elements that go in raising and finishing it externally and internally. Then, it could also denote the maintenance of the *masjid* that would be inclusive of security arrangements, sanitation, upkeep and provision of necessary supplies. And then, it also includes the human dimension of the *masjid* – that believers present themselves in the *masjid* for ‘Ibādah. (Since there is no exact equivalent in English to carry this sense, the nearest one could come would be to populate, people, fill up, make the *masjid* flourish in the number of those present and in the quality of acts of ‘Ibadah they perform therein.) Incidentally, ‘Umrah (عمرة) is called by that name in view of the fact that one visits Baytullah and makes the best of his presence there in terms of ‘Ibādah.

So, the sense of the Qur’ānic word ‘*imārah*’ covers building, maintenance and presence. The Mushriks of Makkah took credit for all three.

They took special pride in considering themselves the custodians of the building of the Sacred Mosque. The present verses tell them that the Mushriks did not have any right to build the mosques of Allah while they were witnesses of their own infidelity. Because of their Kufr and Shirk, their deeds had gone waste and they were to live in the Fire of Jahannam eternally.

The expression: 'witnesses of their own infidelity' could have two meanings. It could either mean that they were virtually confessing to their Kufr and Shirk because of what they were doing as Mushriks. Or, it could refer to their implied confession and witnessing of their Kufr and Shirk when they identify themselves in social situations. Customarily, when a Christian or Jew is asked as to his religious identity, he would say that he was a Christian or Jew. The same would be the case with a fire-worshipper or idolater. They would identify themselves with what they believe in. Thus, the Mushriks will become witnesses of their infidelity against themselves. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verse 17 was describing the negative aspect as related to the Mushriks. It said that they did not deserve the honor of building and maintaining mosques. Verse 18 takes up the positive aspect relating to mosques by saying:

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ
وَلَمْ يَحْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ

In fact, the mosques of Allah are built-up only by those who believe in Allah and in the Last Day and those who establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and who fear none but Allah. So, it is in all likelihood that they are to be among those on the right path.

It means the building of mosques in the real sense is a serene task. It can be done only by those who are bound by the commandments of Allah in their 'Aqīdah (faith) and 'Amal (practice). They must believe in Allah and in the 'Ākhirah, establish Ṣalāh, pay Zakāh and fear none but Allah. At this place, only 'Īmān (faith) in Allah and 'Ākhirah (Last Day) have been mentioned. Faith in the Rasūl (Messenger) of Allah was not mentioned expressly because there is no way one can have faith in Allah Ta'ālā except that one puts his or her faith in His Rasūl – and wholeheartedly accepts the commandments that come from Al-

lah Ta'ālā through him. Therefore, 'faith in the Rasūl' is naturally included under 'faith in Allah.' This is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once asked his noble Companions, 'Do you know what 'Īmān in Allah is?' The Companions said, 'Allah and His Rasūl know best.' He said, 'Īmān in Allah is that one bears witness to the fact that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah and that Muḥammad is the Rasūl of Allah.' This Ḥadīth clearly states that having faith in the Rasūl is included under having faith in Allah and is comprehensively united with it. (Maḏharī with reference to al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

As for the statement: 'fear none but Allah,' it means that, in matters of religion, one should not abandon the command of Allah out of some fear. Otherwise, fearing things that cause fear is quite natural. Beasts, snakes, thieves and robbers generate physical fear but that is not the kind of fear we are talking about here. When the magicians showed snakes made of ropes and staffs to Sayyidnā Mūsā, عليه السلام he had a sense of fear within himself as mentioned in the Qur'ān: فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُّؤْمِنٍ - 20:67. Therefore, the normal fear caused by what causes pain or brings loss is neither contrary to the injunction of the Qur'ān nor to the station of a prophet, walīyy or saint. However, one should not become so overcome by this fear as to start creating confusion about the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā or leaving them out altogether. This is not the style of a true believer and this is precisely what is meant at this place.

Some related issues

When it is said in the present verses that Mushriks and Kāfirs cannot take up the task of 'maintaining' a *masjid* which was something only righteous Muslims could do, it refers to the trusteeship and administrative responsibility of the *masājid*. The outcome is that it is not permissible to appoint a Kāfir the trustee and administrator of any Islāmīc Waqf (endowment). As for the construction of the different units of the structure such as walls and doors, it does not matter even if some non-Muslim is assigned to do the job. (Tafsīr Marāghī). Similarly, when a non-Muslim makes a *masjid* as an act of *thawāb*, or contributes funds for its building, then, it is permissible to accept it. However, the condition is that there should be no danger of a religious or worldly loss, or blame, or usurpation of the property later, or harping on the favor done. (Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, Shāmī and Marāghī)

It was hinted in verse 18 that building a *masjid* and making it throb with multitudes of Muslims making prayers, remembering Allah and reciting the Qur'an is a task that can only be accomplished by a righteous Muslim. It proves that anyone who keeps coming to the *masjid* either to supervise arrangements for the security, maintenance, upkeep and supplies for the *masjid*, or for the *Dhikr* of Allah, or to learn about his religion, or to recite or teach the Holy Qur'an is a perfect believer. These deeds are sufficient as witnesses to this honor.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'when you notice that a person is punctual with his presence in the *masjid*, bear witness to his 'Imān – because, Allah Ta'ālā has said: إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ (In fact, the *masājid* of Allah are built-up only by those who believe in Allah... - 18). Imām Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah have reported this Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd Al-Khudrī.

It appears in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'a person who presents himself in the *masjid* morning and evening, Allah Ta'ālā sets aside a rank of Paradise for him.'

And Sayyidnā Salīm al-Farīsī narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'a person who comes into the *masjid* is a visiting guest of Allah Ta'ālā – and it is incumbent on the host that He honors the guest.' (Maḥzarī with reference to Ṭabarānī, Ibn Jarīr, al-Baihaqī and others)

The commentator of the Qur'an, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh of Panīpat has said, 'the expression 'maintenance of the *masājid*' also requires that the *masjid* should be cleansed of things and practices for which it was not made. It includes activities like buying and selling, worldly conversation, search of lost property, asking people for material help, recitation of idle poetry, disputation, fighting, disturbing peace by noises and things like that. (Maḥzarī)

Verses 19 – 23

أَجْعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَوْنَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا
وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ أَكْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ

اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ
وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَّتِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾ خُلِدِينَ فِيهَا
أَبَدًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا
تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى
الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنكُمْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Have you taken the serving of water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of *Al-masjid-al-harām* as equal to (the acts) of one who believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and takes up Jihād in the way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not lead the wrongdoing people to the right path. [19]

Those who believed and emigrated and took up Jihād in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives are greater in rank in the sight of Allah, and they are the successful ones. [20]

Their Lord gives them the happy news of Mercy from Him, and Pleasure, and of Gardens having an everlasting bliss for them, [21] where they shall dwell forever. Surely, it is Allah with whom there is a great reward. [22]

O those who believe, do not take your fathers and your brothers as your friends, if they prefer infidelity to Faith. And whoever from you has friendship with them, then such people are the wrongdoers. [23]

Commentary

The first four verses (19 – 22) relate to a particular event. A cursory look into its background shows that many Mushriks of Makkah felt proud that they kept the Sacred Mosque bustling with visitors and devotees and ran a drinking water service for the pilgrims. Keeping their rival Muslims in view, they claimed that no deed by anyone could match theirs. When Sayyidnā ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه came to Muslims as a prisoner from the battle of Badr, he had not embraced Islām by that time. His Muslim relatives reproached him for remaining deprived of the blessing of ‘Imān. In response, he too had said the same things, ‘you think ‘Imān and Hijrah are big feathers in your cap, but we too

have our own assets. We are the custodians of the building of the Sacred Mosque and serve water to the pilgrims. No deed by anyone can match these.' Revealed thereupon were these verses. (Ibn Kathīr on the authority of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalḥah from Ibn 'Abbās)

And according to some narratives in the Musnad of 'Abd al-Razzāq, it was after the entry of Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضى الله عنه into the fold of Islām that Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah ibn Shaybah, Sayyidnā 'Abbās and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنهم were talking together. Ṭalḥah said: 'I enjoy an excellence which none of you do. I have the keys to the Baytullah in my hands. If I wish I could go inside it and spend the night there.' Sayyidnā 'Abbās said: 'I am the administrator of the water service for pilgrims and I have rights to the Sacred Mosque.' Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه said, 'I do not understand that which makes you so proud. As for me, I have said my prayers facing the Baytullah six months before anyone of you and I have participated in Jihād with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.' Thereupon, these verses were revealed. They made it clear that no deed done without 'Īmān, no matter how merit worthy, carries any value in the sight of Allah, and no doer of such deeds, while still involved in Shirk, is acceptable with Him.

And the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports an event on the authority of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr رضى الله عنه who says that he was sitting with some Companions close to the Mimbar of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in his Mosque on a Friday. Someone from those present there said, 'In my view, after Islām and 'Īmān, there is no deed superior to serving water to the pilgrims and I do not care about any deed other than this.' Someone else retorted, 'no, Jihād in the way of Allah is the highest of all deeds.' When an argument started between those two, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه reprimanded both of them and said, 'stop quarreling near the Mimbar of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The proper thing to do is to say your Jumu'ah prayer first, then you can go and ask the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself about it.' As suggested, they did go to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to find out his opinion on the matter. Thereupon, these verses were revealed where Jihād has been identified as the deed superior to the 'building' of the Sacred Mosque and the serving of water to pilgrims.

There is nothing far out about the possibility that the revelation of the verses themselves may have been aimed as an answer to the pride

and arrogance of the Mushriks. Later, when unpleasant things took place among Muslims, it is quite possible that the same verses were used as the deciding argument – which might have given the listeners the feeling that these particular verses were revealed in the background of that particular event.

However, the present 'āyat of the Qur'ān carry an answer to both these kinds of events – that an accomplishment, no matter how good and acceptable, is reduced to zero if it smacks of Shirk. Therefore, no Mushrik is superior to Muslims because of his association with the maintenance of the Mosque or the serving of water to pilgrims. And even after their rejection of disbelief and entry into Faith, the status of 'Īmān and Jihād is much higher than the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque and the serving of water to pilgrims. Muslims who took the initiative in 'Īmān and Jihād are superior to Muslims who did not take part in Jihād and remained rendering these services to the Sacred Mosque and the pilgrims.

After these introductory remarks, let us go back to the words of the verses and their translation once again. It reads:

أَجْعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ .

Have you taken the serving of water to the pilgrims and the maintenance of *Al-masjid-al-haram* as equal to (the acts) of one who believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and takes up jihād in the way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah – 19)

Seen contextually, the purpose is to urge that each one from 'Īmān and Jihād is superior to the serving of water to pilgrims and the maintenance of the Mosque, that is, 'Īmān too is superior to both, and Jihād too. Thus, the superiority of 'Īmān provides an answer to what the Mushriks said and the superiority of Jihād corrects Muslims who said that maintaining the Mosque and serving water to pilgrims were superior to Jihād.

The Dhikr of Allah is superior to Jihād

Qāḍī Thanā'ullah has said in Tafsīr Maẓharī, 'the precedence given to Jihād over the maintenance of the Mosque has been done in terms of physical and outward maintenance, that is, the building, repair,

cleaning and allied arrangements – for it goes without saying that Jihād takes precedence over these.’

But, the maintenance (*imārah*) of the *masjid* is not restricted to this sense alone. It has another meaning also, that of being present in the *masjid* for ‘Ibādah and Dhikr of Allah, which also applies here strongly. In fact, the genuine flowering of the objective of making, maintaining and manning the *masjid* with eager devotees comes out from this factor alone. Given this sense, the maintenance of the *masjid* – as very clearly stated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – is superior to Jihād. To substantiate, we can refer to the report of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā’ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad and in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah. According to this report, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, ‘should I not tell you about an act that is superior to all your acts and certainly more so in the sight of your Master? – This act would raise your ranks to the highest levels, would be even superior to spending gold and silver in the way of Allah, and still be way superior to that you bravely fight your enemies in Jihād where you kill them and they kill you?’ The noble Companions said, ‘Do tell us about that act, Yā Rasūlallāh.’ He said, ‘that act is the Dhikr of Allah.’ This tells us that the merit of the Dhikr of Allah is more pronounced than that of Jihād also. And if the ‘maintenance of the *masjid*’ is taken in the sense of the Dhikr of Allah, then, it is superior to Jihād. But, at this place, the pride shown by the Mushriks was not based on the Dhikr of Allah and the ‘Ibādah performed in the *masjid*, instead, it was based on its structural and administrative aspects. Therefore, Jihād was deemed as superior to that.

And when we deliberate into different statements of the Qur’ān and Sunnah as a whole, it appears that the phenomena of the superiority of one act over the other depends on attending conditions and circumstances. There are conditions when one act is superior to the other. With a change in conditions, things could be the other way round. When Islām and Muslims must be defended at all costs, at that time Jihād shall definitely be more merit worthy as compared to all ‘Ibādāt – as evident from the event of the battle of Khandaq where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had to miss four of his daily prayers (*qaḍā*). Conversely, when the need is not so acute, the Dhikr of Allah and ‘Ibādah will be more merit worthy as compared to Jihād.

At the end of the verse (19), by saying: **وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ** (And Allah does not lead the wrongdoing people to the right path), it was pointed out that the thing they were being told about was not difficult to understand. In fact, it was clear, as clear as it can be – that 'Imān is the foundation of all that is done, and is superior to all of them. Then comes Jihād that is superior as compared to the maintenance of the *masjid* and serving water to pilgrims. But, Allah Ta'ālā does not bless the unjust and the wrongdoing with the gift of understanding. Therefore, they keep at their crooked hairsplitting into things that are otherwise very open and obvious.

Verse 20 enlarges upon the subject initiated with the words: **لَا يَسْتَوُونَ** (*lā yastawūn*: they are not equal) in the previous verse (19) where it was said that the believing Mujāhidīn and those engaged only in maintaining the *masjid* and serving water to pilgrims are not equal. This was enlarged by saying: **الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ أَكْثَرُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ** (those who believed and emigrated and took up *jihād* in the way of Allah, with their wealth and lives, are greater in rank in the sight of Allah, and they are the successful ones). The reason is that the Mushriks against them simply had no measure of success whatsoever. As for Muslims in general, they too shared this success in essence, but the success of those identified above had more to it. Therefore, they were the ones whose success was comprehensive.

Verses 21 and 22 tell us about the great reward and ranks these successful people shall have in the life to come:

يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَّتِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُقِيمٌ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا، إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ .

Their Lord gives them the happy news of Mercy from Him, and Pleasure, and of Gardens having an everlasting bliss for them, where they shall dwell for ever. Surely, it is Allah with whom there is a great reward.

These verses mention the merits of Hijrah and Jihād which require that one leaves his country, relatives, friends, companions, wealth and property, all in one stroke. As obvious, surrendering all these attachments is most difficult and painful. Therefore, in the next verse (23), the text disapproves of limitless attachment with these things and thereby prepares Muslim minds to welcome Hijrah and Jihād. It was

said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى
الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ .

O those who believe, do not take your fathers and your brothers as friends, if they prefer infidelity over Faith. And whoever from you has friendship with them, then such people are the wrongdoers.

As for the need to maintain strong bonds of kinship with parents, brothers and sisters and other kinsfolk and to treat all of them generously, the Qur'ān remains full of relevant instructions. But, this verse has made it very clear that each relationship has a limit. Every relationship out of these, whether that of parents and children or that of real brother and sister, has to be bypassed when it stands in competition with one's relationship with Allah and His Messenger. Should these two relationships come on a collision course on some occasion, then, the relationship that has to be kept intact is one's relationship with Allah and His Messenger. All relationships competing against it are to be ignored.

Some special notes and rulings

Some special notes and rulings emerging from verses 19 – 23 are being given below:

1. 'Īmān (faith) is the moving spirit of 'Amal (deed). A deed devoid of it, no matter how good, is nothing but a lifeless form, and simply unacceptable. It has no worth in terms of the salvation in the Hereafter. Of course, there is no injustice with Allah Ta'ālā. He would not let even good deeds of disbelievers that are devoid of the essential light of faith go waste in toto. Their return is given to them right here in this world of their experience. They are given possessions and wealth to procure articles and means of comfort and self-satisfaction as desired. Thus, their account stands all settled, something the Holy Qur'ān takes up in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

2. Sin and disobedience spoil human reason. One starts taking good as bad and bad as good. The statement: وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (And Allah does not lead the wrongdoing people to the right path -19) releases a hint in this direction. Similarly, it has been counterbalanced in another verse of the Qur'ān by saying: إِنْ تَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمُ الْغَوَاةَ : "O those who

believe, if you fear Allah, He will provide you with a criterion (to distinguish between right and wrong) – 8:29.” This gives a clear indication that the attitude of obeying Allah and fearing Him gives polish and luster to human reason, balance and poise to thinking and a never-failing ability to distinguish between good and bad.

3. Even good deeds have a mutual rivalry for precedence. Correspondingly, the same element of precedence operates in the ranks of those who do good deeds. All doers of deeds cannot be placed in the same rank since things depend, not on abundance, but on the quality of deeds. It was said in Sūrah al-Mulk: رَبِّبَلِّغُوهُمْ أَنبَكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (so that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed – 67:2).

4. For blessings to remain everlasting two things are necessary – that there is no end to them and that they are not separated from those who are blessed with them. Therefore, a guarantee was given to the favored servants of Allah on both counts. By saying: نَعِيمٌ مُّثَبِّتٌ (Gardens having an everlasting bliss for them -21), it was declared that the blessings were eternal. Then, by saying: خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا (where they shall dwell forever -22), these successful people were assured that they shall never be separated from these blessings.

The real bond is the bond of Islām and 'Imān – all bonds of lineage and country must be sacrificed for it

5. The fifth point elaborated here is of basic importance. It settles that the relation with Allah and His Messenger should be given precedence over all relations of kinship and friendship. The relation that clashes against it deserves to be broken. This was the way of the noble Companions. This was why they rose to be the superior most people of the Muslim Ummah. It was some trail they blazed by sacrificing all that was with them, their life, wealth, property, relatives and bonds of all sorts, only for the sake of Allah and His Messenger. That the bond of Islām was supreme and universal stood proved when Bilāl from Ethiopea, Ṣuḥayb from Byzantium, Salmān from Persia, the Quraysh from Makkah and the Anṣār from Madīnah became brothers to each other. And that the bonds of lineage and tribe had to be cast aside was also demonstrated when, on the battlefields of Badr and 'Uḥūd, swords were crossed between father and son and between brother and brother. These are significant evidences of the creed they held dear.

اَللّٰهُمَّ ارْزُقْنَا اِتِّبَاعَهُمْ وَاجْعَلْ حُبَّكَ اَحَبَّ اَلْاَشْيَاءِ اِلَيْنَا وَخَشْيَتَكَ اَخَوْفَ
اَلْاَشْيَاءِ عِنْدَنَا .

Yā Allah, bless us with the ability to follow them, and make
Your love the dearest of everything in our sight and make
Your fear the most fear-worthy of everything with us.

Verse 24

قُلْ اِنْ كَانَ اَبَاؤُكُمْ وَاَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَاِخْوَانُكُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُكُمْ
وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَاَمْوَالٌ اِقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا
وَمَسْكَنٌ تَرْضَوْنَهَا اَحَبَّ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِى
سَبِيْلِهِ فَتَرْصُصُوْا حَتّٰى يٰتِىَ اللّٰهُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ
الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Say, "If your fathers and your sons and your brothers
and your spouses and your clan and the wealth you
have earned and the trade you apprehend will recede
and the homes you like are dearer to you than Allah
and His Messenger and *jihād* in His way, then, wait un-
til Allah comes with His command. And Allah does not
lead the sinning people to the right path. [24]

Commentary

This verse of Sūrah al-Taubah was revealed essentially about people who did not migrate from Makkah at the time migration was made obligatory for them. Their love for family and property had stopped them from carrying out their obligation to migrate. In their case, Allah Almighty asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell them what appears in the verse cited above.

As for the statement: "Wait until Allah comes with His command," Tafsīr authority Mujāhid has said that 'command' referred to here means the command to carry out Jihād and conquer Makkah. The sense of the statement is that the time is near when the evil end of those who sacrifice their relationship with Allah and His Messenger for the sake of worldly bonds shall become visible to all. That is the time when Makkah shall stand conquered, those who chose to discard their appointed duty shall face disgrace and their bonds with people

and things they fancied shall be of no avail to them.

Then, there is the interpretation of the famous Ḥasan al-Baṣri who has said that ‘command’ at this place means the command of punishment. The sense is that those who sacrificed their spiritual bonds as related to the Hereafter just for the sake of their attachment to what was blandly material and did not migrate as instructed were people who would be seized by the Divine command of punishment fairly soon. Either this punishment would come upon them right here in this mortal world, or they shall have to face the punishment of the Hereafter – which is certain. The purpose at this place is to serve a note of warning against the abandonment of the obligation of migration – but, what has been mentioned here is ‘Jihād’ and not Hijrah (migration), which is the next step after Hijrah. The hint embedded here is that the real thing has not happened yet. What has come up right now is no more than the initial command to migrate. There are people who did not have the courage to do even that. Ahead of them is the forthcoming command of Jihād following which they would have to surrender all worldly attachments for the sake of love for Allah and His Messenger, even stake their lives for that noble cause. And it is also possible that this may be a place where migration itself has been made to stand for Jihād – because, in reality, that too is nothing but a department of Jihād.

Finally, by saying: **وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ** (And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path) at the end of the verse, it was made amply clear that those who, despite the standing command of migration, opted for their temporal relationships and kept clinging to their family, relatives, wealth and property, shall soon find out that this conduct of theirs was not going to serve their purpose even in this mortal world. If they were thinking that they would keep basking in the sunshine of family, wealth and property in everlasting peace and tranquility, then, they would never realize this dream. Once the command of Jihād comes, these very attractions will turn into burdens too cumbersome to go along with – because, Allah Ta‘ālā does not allow the sinning and the disobedient to achieve their desired objective.

Standing Rules of Hijrah (migration)

1. First of all, when Hijrah from Makkah to Madīnah was made obligatory, it was not simply a matter of obligation, in fact, it was also

a hallmark and a symbol of being a Muslim. Anyone who did not migrate at that time, despite having the ability to do so, was not taken to be a Muslim. This injunction was abrogated after the Conquest of Makkah.

2. After that, the basic injunction which remained operative was: Should there be a land where it is not possible for one to comply with his or her religious obligations, such as praying and fasting in accordance with the injunctions of Allah, migrating from there shall remain a matter of duty (*farḍ*) for ever – on condition that one is capable of undertaking such migration. This is the first degree of compliance.

3. Compliance in the second degree is that one should leave every such place where sin and disobedience have a dominant role in life. This act remains recommended (*mustaḥabb*) for ever. (see details in Fath al-Bārī)

It will be noticed that the address in the verse under study is direct. Those being addressed are people who did not migrate when they were asked to do so because they cared more about their worldly bonds. But, the generality of the words of the verse is telling all Muslims that their love for Allah and His Messenger is obligatory on them in a special degree. That degree is the highest, the foremost. This degree requires that no other bond or love for anything or anyone should ever prevail over it. So, whoever fails to come up with this level of love becomes deserving of punishment from Allah. Let him, then, wait for it.

The Touchstone of True Faith (ʿImān)

Therefore, it has been reported in an authentic Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Anas ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه which appears in the two collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: No one can be a true believer until I become to him dearer than his father, children and everyone else in this world.

According to a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضى الله عنه appearing in Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: Anyone who takes a friend or makes an enemy for the sake of Allah or spends his wealth or withholds it for the sake of Allah has made his faith perfect.

These narrations from Ḥadīth prove that perfection of faith de-

pend on the dominance of the love for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم over all other kinds of love, friendship and enmity, concession and reservation – all of which must remain subservient to the will and command of Allah and His Messenger.

Tafsīr authority, Qāḍī al-Baiḍāwī and other commentators have said that there are very few people who could be considered exempt from the warning given in this verse. The reason is that even the greatest among those who practice and teach religious percepts and virtues seem to be subdued by their love for family and belongings – of course, with the exception of those Allah wills to be otherwise. However, Qāḍī al-Baiḍāwī explains further by saying that ‘love’ here means love that is within one’s control. It has nothing to do with love which one does not control, that which is natural – because Allah Ta‘ālā does not obligate anyone beyond one’s capacity and control. Therefore, a person may have his heart full of natural love for worldly bonds but he should not let it overpower him to the limit that he starts acting against the will and command of Allah and His Messenger. If so, this warning will not apply to him and he will be taken as one who keeps his love for Allah and His Messenger above everything. This is very much like the case of a patient who gets nervous about an unpleasant medicine or unexpected surgery. This is natural. But, he does agree to it rationally since it is for his own good. If so, it is not blameworthy. Then, commonsense never forces him to get rid of his natural nervousness and dislike. Similarly, if someone feels naturally uncomfortable while complying with some Divine injunctions due to his love for wealth and children, yet bears by the discomfort and carries those injunctions out, then, that is not blameworthy either. In fact, it is praiseworthy for he would be regarded as one who keeps his love for Allah and His Messenger on top of everything in the light of this verse.

Nevertheless, as for the high station of love is concerned, there is no doubt about the ideal that love must come to prevail over one’s nature as well and go on to turn every discomfort welcome while complying with what your beloved would like you to do. This is not so difficult to comprehend. Think of the seekers of material comfort in this world. Day in and day out, they would embrace the hardest conceivable labor with a smile to get what they want. For a salary check at the end of the month, one would sacrifice sleep, comfort and social relationships.

Honestly or dishonestly, such a seeker would let his desire dominate everything else to achieve his goal.

Moving away from the seekers of the material, let us consider the charisma of the People of Allah. When they seek Allah and His Messenger and the blessings of the-life-to-come, they too reach a station of love which pales out any thoughts of pain and discomfort. According to a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: There are three traits which, if found in a person, would bless him or her with the sweetness of faith. Those three traits are: (1) That Allah and His Messenger are, in his sight, dearer than anything other than them, (2) that one loves a servant of Allah for His sake only, (3) and that the very thought of Kufr and Shirk gives one the feeling of being thrown away into the fire.

The 'sweetness of faith' mentioned in the Ḥadīth quoted above means this very station of love that makes the hardest possible labor most welcome for the true seeker. Love has its own chemistry of turning the sour into the sweet. Some Muslim scholars have pointed out that a heart when enriched with the sweetness of faith starts passing it on to other parts of the body which begin to relish it during acts of worship and obedience. In some reports, the same thing has been equated with the ecstasy of faith – and in Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The delight of my eyes is in Ṣalāh.

Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh of Panīpat has said in Tafsīr Mazḥarī: This station of love for Allah and His Messenger is a great blessing – but, it can be acquired only when one stays close to the People of Allah. It is for this reason that Muslim mystics consider it necessary that it be sought with Shaykhs. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has said that this station of friendship can be acquired by the one who is ready to sacrifice, like Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh, عليه السلام everything for the love of Allah – wealth, children, life, everything.

Finally, says commentator al-Baidāwī: The preservation and protection of the Sunnah and Shari'ah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the rebuttal of and the defense against those who oppose or malign them is also an open sign of love for Allah and His Messenger.

رزقنا الله تعالى وجميع المسلمين حبه وحب رسوله كما يحب ويرضاه

May Allah bless us and bless all Muslims with love for Him and

the love for His Messenger.

Verses 25 - 27

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ ۖ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۖ إِذْ
 أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَصَافَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ
 الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُم مُّدْبِرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ
 سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا
 وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۖ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ
 اللَّهُ مَنِ ابْعَدَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

Allah has surely blessed you with His help on many battlefields, and on the day of Hunain* : (remember) when you were proud of your great number then it did not help you at all, and the earth was straitened for you despite all its vastness, then you turned away on your backs. [25]

Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and sent down forces which you did not see, and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers. [26]

Yet Allah relents, after that, to whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [27]

Commentary:

Described in the verses cited above are events relating to the scenario of defeat and victory at the battle of Hunain. Along with it, several primary and subsidiary problems have also been resolved as a corollary. As the verse opens, Allah Ta'ālā mentions His favor and grace which has descended upon Muslims on all occasions and under all conditions. It was said: لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ (Allah has surely blessed you with His help on many battlefields). Particularly cited soon after this opener was: وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ (and on the day of Hunain) that is, Muslims were blessed with the help of Allah on the day of the battle of Hunain as

*. Hunain : The name of a place near Makkah, the site of the battle of Hunain.

well.

The battle of Hunain was specially mentioned because many events and circumstances unfolded unexpectedly and extraordinarily during the course of this encounter. If you were to think about these happenings, you would realize that they make one stronger in faith and bolder in deed. Therefore, before we take up a literal explanation of the verses under study, it is appropriate to describe the major events of this battle. They appear in authentic books of Ḥadīth and history. We are describing them in a somewhat detailed manner so that it becomes easier to understand not only the verses mentioned above but also the lessons that these events teach. The major portion of these events has been taken from Tafsīr Maḥzarī. Necessary references to books of Ḥadīth and history may be seen there.

Hunain is the name of a place between Makkah al-Mukarramah and Ṭā'if. It is located at a distance of about ten miles from Makkah. When Makkah was conquered in Ramaḍān of Hijrah 8, the Quraysh of Makkah laid down their arms before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This alarmed the tribe of Banū Thaḳīf from Ṭā'if who were a branch of the tribe of Hawāzin known all over Arabia as big, brave, rich and warring. They got together and considered the challenge posed by the newly gained strength of Muslims after their conquest of Makkah. Once the Muslims settled down, they concluded, they would turn to them. Therefore, they decided, the wisest course for them was to launch a pre-emptive attack on Muslims much before they came upon them. To carry out this plan, the tribe of Hawāzin brought all its branches spread out from Makkah to Ṭā'if together. Included there were all big and small units of this tribe – except a few individuals who were less than a hundred in number.

The leader of this movement was Mālīk ibn 'Awf who became a Muslim later on and rose to be a major standard-bearer of Islām. However, at that particular time, his zeal to attack Muslims was the highest. Going along with him, the overwhelming majority of the tribe started preparing for war. Two small branches of this tribe, Banū Ka'b and Banū Kilāb, did not approve of this action plan. Allah Ta'ālā had blessed them with some foresight. They said: Even if the forces of the whole world from the East to the West came together against Muḥam-

mad, he would still overcome all of them. We cannot fight the power of God (with him). As for the rest of them, they all gave their pledges to fight. Mālīk ibn ‘Awf devised a plan to ensure that all of them abided by their commitment to the war. He proposed that all participants should take their families and valuables with them. The catch was that, in case they thought of bolting away from the battlefield, the love of wife, children and things of value with them would hold them back like shackles on their feet and they would be left with no freedom to desert the battlefield. As for their numbers, historians differ. According to the master of Ḥadīth, ‘Allāmah ibn Ḥajar and some others, the weightier opinion is that they were twenty-four or twenty eight thousand in number. Some others have given a number of four thousand. It is possible that, with the inclusion of women and children, the total number could be twenty-four or twenty eight thousand while the actual number of fighting men among them remained four thousand.

Anyway, when the news of their dangerous intentions reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Makkah al-Mukarramah, he decided to confront them. He appointed Sayyidnā ‘Attāb ibn Asīd as the Amīr of Makkah al-Mukarramah, left Sayyidnā Mu‘adh ibn Jabal behind to teach people Islām, and asked the Quraysh of Makkah for weapons and other war supplies – of course, as a borrowing. The Quraysh chief, Ṣafwān ibn Umaiyah spoke out: ‘Do you want to take this war material forcibly against our will?’ He said: ‘No, we would rather like to borrow it from you, a borrowing guaranteed to be returned.’ After hearing that, he gave one hundred coats of mail and Nawfil ibn Ḥārith offered three thousand spears likewise. According to a narration of Imām Zuhri, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was now ready to launch the Jihād with an army of fourteen thousand Companions – which included twelve thousand Anṣār of Madīnah who had accompanied him for the conquest of Makkah. Then, there were two thousand Muslims who were residents of Makkah and its environs and who had embraced Islām at the time of its conquest. They are known as ‘*al-ṭulaqā*.’ It was on Saturday, the 6th of Shawwāl that he marched out for this battle saying that the next day, *insha’Allah*, they shall be camping at the spot in Khaif banī Kinānah where the Quraysh of Makkah had assembled to write down their pledge to excommunicate Muslims.

As for the army of fourteen thousand Mujāhidīn, it did march out of

the city for Jihād. But, there was another crowd of people – many men and women of the city of Makkah – who also came out of their homes as spectators. Their hearts were excited with conflicting emotions. Speaking generally, if Muslims were to be defeated on this occasion, they thought, they would have a good chance of taking their revenge against Muslims – and if they were to win, they consoled themselves that they were not going to lose anything after all.

Shaibah ibn ‘Uthmān was one of these spectators. When he embraced Islām later on, he narrated what had happened to him: ‘In the battle of Badr, my father was killed by Ḥamzah and my uncle by Sayyidnā ‘Alī. My heart was full of anger. I was bent on taking my revenge. I took advantage of this opportunity and started walking alongside the Muslim forces. The purpose was to find an opportunity and attack the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. I kept hanging with them always on the look out for that opportunity until came the time during the initial stage of this Jihād when some Muslims had started losing their ground. When I found them running, I seized the opportunity and reached close to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, I saw that ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās was guarding him on the right and Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥārith on the left. Therefore, I dashed towards the rear with the intention of attacking him with my sword all of a sudden. Right then, he happened to look at me and he called out to me: ‘Shaibah, come here.’ He asked me to come closer. Then, he put his blessed hand on my chest and prayed: ‘O Allah, remove the Shaytān away from him.’ Now, when I raise my eyes, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم becomes in my heart dearer than my own eye and ear and life. He said to me: ‘Go and fight the disbelievers.’ Now, there I was staking my life for him, fighting the enemy valiantly right to the end. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from this Jihād, I presented myself before him. At that time, he told me about the thoughts I had when I started off from Makkah with a particular intention and how I was shadowing him in order to kill him. But, since Allah had intended that I must do something good, I did what I did.’

Something similar happened to Naḍr ibn Ḥārith. He too had gone to Ḥunain with the same intention. However, when he reached there, Allah Ta‘ālā put in his heart the thought of the innocence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and a feeling of love for him. This turned him

into a valiant Mujāhid who took no time in piercing through the enemy lines.

During the course of this very expedition, yet another event took place. This concerns Abū Burdah ibn Niyār. When he reached the place known as Awṭās, he saw that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sitting under a tree and there was someone else with him. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told Abū Burdah that he was sleeping when the man sitting with him came, grabbed his sword, positioned by the side of his head and said: 'O Muḥammad, now tell me who can save you from me?' I said, 'Allah!' When he heard this, the sword fell down from his hands.' Abū Burdah said: 'O Messenger of Allah, please allow me to behead this enemy of Allah, he looks like a spy.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Abū Burdah, say no more. Allah Ta'ālā is my Protector until my religion prevails over all others.' After all that, he uttered not a single word of reproach for that person, in fact, let him go free.

When Muslims camped after reaching Ḥunain, Sayyidnā Suhail ibn Ḥanṣalah came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the news that one of their riders had brought a report that the entire tribe of Hawāzin had arrived with an array of their war materials. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم smiled and said: 'Do not worry. All this material has come as war spoils for Muslims!'

Once settled at the camping grounds, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥaddād to gather intelligence from the area controlled by the enemy. He went there and stayed with them for two days watching all prevailing conditions closely. He saw the enemy leader and commander, Mālīk ibn 'Awf and heard him saying to his people: 'Muḥammad has yet to face a nation of experienced warriors. That fight against the innocent Quraysh of Makkah has given him false notions. He has become proud of his power. Now, he will find out where he stands. Let all of you go in battle formation at the early hour of dawn in a manner that each warrior has his wife, children and articles of value behind him. Then, take your swords out of the sheaths, break the sheaths, and attack, all together in one go.' These people were really very experienced in warfare. They had deployed their forces not only openly but secretly too. For example, they had hidden some units of their army in different mountain passes.

This was a view of how the army of disbelievers was getting ready

to fight. On the other side, this was the first Jihād of Muslims in which fourteen thousand fighters had come out to confront the enemy. The war material they had with them was much more than they ever had. Then, they had the experience of Badr and 'Uḥud where they had seen how a negligible number of three hundred and thirteen ill-equipped men had triumphed over a strong army of one thousand well-equipped fighters. Under these circumstances, when they came to think about their numbers and preparations on that day, some unfortunate words - 'today, it is impossible that anyone can defeat us, for today, once the fighting starts, the enemy will run' - were uttered by some of them (as reported by Ḥākim and Bazzār).

This attitude – that someone relies solely on one's own power – was something disliked by the supreme Master of humans, jinns and angels. Hence, Muslims were taught a lesson for their lack of discretion. They got a taste of it when the tribe of Hawāzin, following their battle plan, launched a surprise attack and their army units lurking in mountain passes encircled Muslims from all sides. The dust kicked up by their sudden tactical advance turned the day into night, the Companions lost their foothold and started running. In contrast, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was the lone figure seen advancing on his mount, forward and not backwards. A counted few of his noble Companions – reportedly, three hundred, or even less than one hundred as said by others – did, however, stay with him, but they too wished that he would not continue advancing.

Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم realized that the situation was grave. He asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه to call his Companions. These were his Companions who had given him a pledge to fight when they had assembled under the Tree. Then, he pointed out to those who had been mentioned in the Qur'ān as well as to the Anṣār of Madīnah who had promised to stake their lives in this Jihād. He wanted all of them to come back and wanted them to know that the Messenger of Allah was present on the battlefield.

The call given by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه ran through the battlefield like some power current. All deserters were smitten with remorse. They regrouped with fresh vigor and valor and fought against the enemy fully and decisively. First the enemy commander, Mālik ibn 'Awf ran away from the battlefield leaving his fami-

ly and belongings behind and took refuge in the fort of Ṭā'if. After him, the rest of his people deserted the battlefield. Seventy of their chiefs were killed. Incidentally, when some children received wounds at the hands of Muslim soldiers, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took immediate notice and prohibited them sternly against any such action in future. Everything they left fell into Muslim hands. It included six thousand prisoners of war, twenty four thousand camels, forty thousand goats and four thousand 'Ūqiyah* of silver.

The same subject has been taken up in the first (25) and second (26) verses. The gist of what was said there is: 'when you waxed proud of your numbers, it did not work for you and you found yourself all cornered as if the earth was straitened for you despite its vastness. Then, you showed your backs and ran. Then, Allah Ta'ālā sent down upon you His tranquility – sending forces of angels for His Messenger and the believers with him, something you did not see. Thus, the disbelievers were punished at your hands.'

It will be useful to explain the statement: **ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ** (Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers) appearing in verse 26 a little further. It means that Allah Ta'ālā sent down His tranquility upon the hearts of the noble Companions who had lost their foothold on the battlefield during the initial attack of the enemy at Hunain. This caused their feet to become firm again and those who had run away came back. As for the sending of tranquility upon the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Companions who had stayed on the war front with firmness and determination, it means that they could see victory close at hand. And since the tranquility mentioned here was of two kinds – one for those who ran, and the other for those who stayed on with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with firmness and determination - it is to point out to this refinement that the expressions: **...عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ** (...upon His Messenger and upon the believers) have been placed separately and introduced one after the other with the repetition of the preposition **عَلَى** ('alā: upon).

After that, it was said: **وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا** (... and sent down forces which you did not see). This means that the people at large did not see. That some reports mention the 'seeing' of these 'forces' should not be taken

* 1 'Uqiyah = 122.472 grams approximately. (اوزان شرعية / Muftī Muḥammad Shafī)

as contrary to this.

After that, in conclusion, it was said: وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ It means that Allah punished those who disbelieved – and those who disbelieved deserved that punishment. This punishment or recompense refers to their subjugation at the hands of Muslims which was something witnessed openly. In sum, what was their worldly punishment, they received promptly. As for their fate in the Hereafter, it has been mentioned in verse 27: ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (Yet Allah relents, after that, to whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful).

A hint has been given here that some people out of those who have received their punishment in the form of defeat at Muslim hands in this Jihād and who still keep adhering to their disbelief will be blessed with the ability to become true believers. The manner in which this happened is given below in some details.

Victory of Ḥunain: Enemy chiefs embrace Islām, Prisoners Return

It will be recalled that some chiefs from the tribes of Hawāzin and Thaqīf were killed in the battle of Ḥunain. Some ran away. Their families became prisoners of war and their properties fell into Muslim hands as spoils that included six thousand prisoners, twenty four thousand camels, more than forty thousand goats and four thousand 'Ūqiyah of silver that equals approximately 489.888 kilograms. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appointed Sayyidnā Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb as the Custodian of war spoils.

After that, the defeated forces of Hawāzin and Thaqīf tried to regroup at various places to challenge Muslims but at every such place they kept facing defeat. Such was the awe of their victors that they chose to lock themselves up into the strong fortress of Tā'if. The Holy Prophet ﷺ put this fortress under siege which lasted up to fifteen or twenty days. The besieged enemy kept shooting their arrows from inside the fortress. They could not muster enough courage to come out in the open. The Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم requested him to pray that some evil befalls these people – but he prayed that they be guided right. Then, he went into consultation with his Companions and decided to return. When he reached Jī'irānah he intend-

ed to go to Makkah al-Mu‘azzamah and perform “Umrah and then return to Madīnah. Many of the Makkans who had come as spectators of Muslim victory or defeat seized the occasion to announce their conversion to Islām.

It was on arrival at this stage of the journey that arrangements were made to distribute spoils. While this distribution was still in process, a deputation of fourteen chiefs of the tribe of Hawāzin led by Zuhayr ibn Ṣurad came in all of a sudden. They had come to pay their respects to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Included in the group was Abū Yarqān, a foster uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who came up to him, told him that they had embraced Islām and requested that their families and properties may be returned to them. The request was made more personal when he reminded the Messenger of Allah that they were related to him through the bond of fosterage and they were in a distress that was no secret for him. So, he pleaded for his favor. The leader of the deputation was a man of poetry. He said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, had we presented some such request in a distress like this before the King of Byzantine or Iraq, then they too – we believe – would have not rejected our entreaty. And as for you, Allah has certainly made you the foremost in high morals, so we have come to you with high hopes.’

The Holy Prophet ﷺ who was himself a mercy for the whole world found his difficulty compounded. On the one hand, his inherent mercy for people demanded that all prisoners and properties be returned to them, while on the other, he realized that all Mujāhidīn have a right in spoils and depriving all of them of their due right was not proper in terms of justice. Therefore, according to a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ addressed his companions saying:

“Here are your brothers. They have repented. I wish that their prisoners should be returned back to them. Those from you who are ready to return their share willingly, and with pleasure, should do so as an act of grace. As for those who are not ready to do so, to them we shall give a proper return for it from the first *Fai*’ properties (spoils gained without fighting) that come to us in future.”

Seeking of public opinion: The correct method

Voices rose from all sides that they were willing to return all pris-

oners in good cheer but, in view of his concern in matters involving justice, equity and rights, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not consider different voices of this nature as sufficient. He said: I do not know who are those who got ready to surrender their right gladly and who are those who remained silent under pressure. This is a matter of the rights of people. Therefore, every head of a family or chief of a group should go to their respective families and groups, talk to them individually, separately and frankly, and tell him the truth.

Following his wishes, the chiefs went back to their people, met each of them separately, secured their first-hand agreement and reported to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that all of them were ready to surrender their rights. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned all those prisoners back to them.

These were the people whose Taubah or repentance was pointed to in verse 27 which begins with the words: **كُلَّمَا يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ** (Yet Allah relents, after that, to whomsoever He wills). As for the details of events that came to pass during the battle of Hunain, part of it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān while the rest has been taken from authentic narrations of Ḥadīth. (Maḥzarī and Ibn Kathīr)

Injunctions and Rulings

Many injunctions, rulings and subsidiary elements of guidance appear here under the shadows of these events. In fact, they are the very purpose of the narration of these events.

The very first instruction given in these verses is that Muslims should never wax proud of their power or numerical superiority. They should realize that the way they look towards Allah and His help at times when they are weak and deficient, very similarly, when they are strong and powerful, their total trust should also remain on nothing but the help of Allah alone.

In the battle of Hunain, Muslims enjoyed numerical superiority. They had sufficient weapons and supplies. This led some Companions to utter words of pride to the effect that no one could dare defeat them on that particular day. Allah Ta'ālā did not like that a group of people so dear to him would say something like that. The result was that Muslims lost their foothold on the battlefield at the time the enemy launched the initial attack. They started running. Then, it was only

with unseen help from Allah that this battle was won.

Properties of defeated non-believers:

The need for justice and caution

The second instruction given here relates to the need for observing caution and justice when handling properties owned by non-believers who have been defeated and overpowered. This is illustrated by the action taken by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he had taken war materials for the battle of Ḥunain from the vanquished non-Muslims of Makkah. This was an occasion when these supplies could have been taken from them by force too. But the *Rasūl* of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم took these as borrowing – and then, he returned everything so borrowed back to them.

This event taught Muslims an essential lesson – that they should maintain perfect justice and show mercy and magnanimity even when they are dealing with enemies.

The third instruction is embedded in what he said while making a stopover at Khaif banī Kinānah enroute Ḥunain. ‘Tomorrow’, he said, ‘we shall be staying at a place where our enemies, the Quraysh of Makkah, had once sat and resolved to excommunicate Muslims!’ The hint given here is clear – when Allah Ta‘ālā has blessed Muslims with victory and power, they should not forget about the days of distress in the past, so that they remain grateful to Allah under all conditions. It will also be recalled that the defeated Hawāzin forces had taken refuge in the Ṭā’if fortress from where they were shooting arrows against Muslims repeatedly. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was requested to pray for a curse to fall on them. He did not respond to their arrows in that manner. He prayed that they be guided to the right path. Being mercy for all the worlds, this prayer for his enemies is teaching Muslims the lesson that Muslims, when they fight in a Jihād, do not intend to subdue the enemy, instead, their objective is to bring them to guidance. Therefore, making efforts to achieve this objective should not be neglected at any time.

The third verse (27) instructs Muslims that they should not write off disbelievers who have been defeated at war because it is likely that Allah Ta‘ālā may give them the ability to embrace Islām and be blessed with the light of faith. The Hawāzin deputation’s entry into the fold of Islām proves it.

The same deputation from the tribe of Hawāzin had requested the return of their prisoners and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had asked the gathering of Companions if they agreed to do that out of their free will. The response came in the form of voiced ayes from the audience. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not consider it to be sufficient. Instead, he took elaborate steps to ascertain the approval of each and every individual before he would act.

This proves that the matter of rights is serious. It is not permissible to take what belongs to a person as a matter of right unless it becomes certain that this was done on the basis of his or her free will. The silence of a person either due to the awe of the crowd or the sense of shame before people is not a sufficient proof of the person's free will and heart-felt consent. From here, Muslim jurists have deduced the ruling that it is not correct to solicit contributions even for some religious purpose when it is done to impress a person by one's personal office, power, or influence. The reason is that there are many gentle people who would be affected by such conditions around and decide to get away by giving something just to avoid being embarrassed – of course, this does not have the backing of genuine free will, approval and pleasure. Incidentally, what is given in that spirit does not have any *barakah* either.

Verse 28

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا
الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ
يُغْنِيَكُمْ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

O those who believe, the Mushriks* are impure indeed, so let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-haram* after this year of theirs. And if you apprehend poverty, then, Allah shall, if He wills, make you self-sufficient with His grace. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [28]

Commentary

A proclamation of withdrawal was made against Mushriks and disbelievers at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Taubah. The verse appearing

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

above describes injunctions related to this proclamation. In substance, it stipulated that treaties with disbelievers should be terminated or fulfilled within a year and after the passage of one year from this proclamation, no Mushrik should remain within the sacred precincts of the Haram.

This has been stated in the present verse in a particular manner that accomplishes two objectives simultaneously. It points out to the wisdom behind this injunction and it also alleviates the apprehensions of some Muslims about its implementation. Here, the word: نجس (*najas*) has been used with *fathah* on the letter *jīm* which carries the sense of filth and filth denotes every impurity which one averts naturally. Imām Raghīb al-Iṣfahānī has said: It also includes impurity that is perceived through the senses, such as the eye, the nose or the hand as well as that which one is able to know about through knowledge and reason. Therefore, the word: '*najas*' is inclusive of filth or impurity of three types. The first one is real. Everyone perceives it as such. Then, there is the second type. This is known as legal because it makes *wuḍū* (ablution) or *ghuṣl* (bath) legally necessary. Examples are the state of *Janābah* (intercourse, ejaculation, wet-dream etc.), as well as, the post-menstruation and post-childbed states known as *ḥaid* and *nifās*. And then, there is the spiritual impurity that relates to the human heart, for example, false beliefs and evil morals. The word '*najas*' covers all of these.

The word, اِنَّمَا (*innamā*) introduced in this verse has been used for *ḥaṣr* or restriction. Therefore, the sentence comes to mean that Mushriks (those who ascribe partners to Allah) are impure indeed (in the sense of 'are but filth'). The truth of the matter is that all three types of impurities are found in Mushriks because they just do not take a lot of impure things as really impure. The outcome is that they do not make any effort to stay away from smearing themselves with obvious impurities – such as, liquor and things made with it. As for the modalities of purification against acquired impurities provided by religious codes – such as, the prescribed bath after having fallen into the state of *Janābah* – they simply do not believe in them! Similarly, spiritual impurities like false beliefs and evil morals do not make much sense to them.

Therefore, by declaring Mushriks to be impure in this verse, the in-

junction given was: فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا (so let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* after this year of theirs).

The word: *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* is generally used to denote the place that is surrounded by a walled structure around the Baytullah. But, in the Qur'an and Ḥadīth, this word, at times, has been used for the sacred precincts of the entire Ḥaram of Makkah as well – which is an area of several square miles and is hemmed in by limits originally appointed by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It is in this very sense that words of the text of the Qur'an referring to the event of Mi'rāj: مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (from *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* – 18:1) have been taken. This interpretation has the backing of a consensus because the event of Mi'rāj did not originate from inside what is commonly known as *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām*, instead of which, it started from the home of Sayyidah Umm Hānī' رضى الله عنها. Similarly, in the noble verse: إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ (Except those with whom you made a treaty near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* – 9:7), *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* means the whole of Ḥaram – because, the event of making a peace treaty mentioned there took place at Ḥudaibiyah, which is located outside the limits of the Ḥaram close by. (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

Therefore, the verse comes to mean that the entry of the Mushriks into the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram shall be banned after 'this' year. Which year is 'this' year? Some commentators say that it means the Hijrah year 10. But, according to the majority of commentators, the preferred year is Hijrah 9 – because, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had made the 'proclamation of withdrawal' through Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā Alī رضى الله عنهما during the Ḥajj season of this very Hijrah year 9. Therefore, the period between Hijrah 9 and Hijrah 10 is the year of respite. It was only after Hijrah 10 that this law came into force.

Does the rule stop Mushriks from entering the Sacred Mosque only, or does it apply to all mosques?

About the injunction appearing in the cited verse: that no Mushrik should be allowed to come near *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* (the Sacred Mosque) after Hijrah 10, three things need consideration. Firstly, we have to determine if this injunction is particular to the Sacred Mosque, or other mosques of the world also fall under its jurisdiction. Secondly, if this is particular to the Sacred Mosque, then, is the entry of a Mushrik in the Sacred Mosque banned in an absolute sense? Or the ban of

such entry applies only in the case of Ḥajj and ‘Umrah – not otherwise. Thirdly, this injunction appearing in the verse relates to Mushriks. In that case, are the disbelievers (*kuffār*) among the People of the Book included here, or are they not?

Since the words of the Qur’ān are silent about these details, therefore, the Mujtahid Imāms have, by turning to the hints of the Qur’ān and the reports of Ḥadīth, given a description of injunctions in accordance with their respective Ijtihād. The first investigation in this connection is about the terms of reference in which the Holy Qur’ān has declared Mushriks as ‘*najas*’ (filth). If this means physical filth or some major legal impurity (*janābah* etc.), then, as evident, allowing the entry of filth in any *masjid* is not permissible. Similarly, allowing any person in the state of major impurity or a woman in the state of menstruation or childbed in any *masjid* is not permissible. And if ‘*najāsah*’ in this verse means the spiritual filthiness of *kufr* and *shirk*, then, it is possible that the injunction which covers it may be different from the injunction which covers outward filth.

According to Tafsīr Al-Qurṭubī, Imām Mālik and other jurists of Madīnah, may Allah have mercy on them, said: Mushriks are filthy on all counts. They generally do not abstain from obvious filth, are not very particular about taking a bath after having fallen into the state of major impurity and, as for the spiritual impurity of *kufr* and *shirk*, they already suffer from it. Therefore, this injunction is equally applicable to all Mushriks and mosques. To prove this, they have cited an executive order given by Sayyidnā ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz رضى الله عنه in which he had instructed the administrators of cities that they should not allow disbelievers to enter mosques. He had quoted this very verse as part of his executive order. In addition to that, there is a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in which he said: لَا أُحِلُّ الْمَسْجِدَ لِلْمَنْظِرِ وَلَا الْجَنْبِ (I do not make entry into the *masjid* lawful for any woman in menstruation or for any person in the state of major impurity) – and since the Mushriks and disbelievers do not generally take a bath when in a state of *janābah*, their entry into the *masjid* has been prohibited.

Imām Shāfi‘ī has said that this injunction is applicable to all Mushriks and disbelievers among the People of the Book – but, is restricted to the Sacred Mosque. Their entry into other mosques is not prohibited. (Qurṭubī) In proof, he has cited the event relating to Thumāmah ibn

Athāl, according to which Thumāmah was arrested. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had him tied to a pillar of his Mosque before he embraced Islām.

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, not letting Mushriks come near the Sacred Mosque as commanded in the verse means that they will not be allowed to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah in their peculiar polytheistic manner from the next year. Its proof lies in the proclamation of withdrawal which was made through Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه at the time of the Ḥajj season. This proclamation made was for nothing but: لَا يَحْجُّ بَعْدَ الْعَامِ مُشْرِكٌ which made it very clear that no Mushrik will be able to perform Ḥajj after that year. Therefore, the meaning of the statement: فَلَا يَقْرُبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ (so let them not come near *Al-masjid-al-harām*) in this verse is – in accordance with this proclamation – nothing but that they have been prohibited to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah, with the exception of entering there on the basis of a particular need which would be subject to the permission of the Muslim 'Amīr. This is proved by what happened in the case of the deputation from the tribe of Thaḳīf. When, after the Conquest of Makkah, their deputation came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he let them stay in the *masjid*, although they were *kāfirs* at that time. Thereupon, the Companions submitted: 'Yā Rasūlallāh, these are filthy people!' He said: 'The floor of the *masjid* is not affected by their impurity.' (Jaṣṣaṣ)

This report from Ḥadīth also makes it very clear that the Holy Qur'ān, when it calls Mushriks '*najas*' (filth), it refers to the filth of their *kufr* and *shirk* – as interpreted by the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Similarly, according to a narration of the Companion, Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that no Mushrik should go near the Masjid except that the person be a bondman or bondwoman of a Muslim – then, he could be admitted if needed. (Qurtubī)

This Ḥadīth too confirms that the Mushriks were not prevented from entering into the Sacred Mosque on the basis of their outward impurity as the cause – otherwise, there was nothing particular about a bondman or bondwoman. In fact, the real basis is the danger of *kufr* and *shirk* lest these come to dominate. In the case of a bondman or bondwoman, this danger does not exist. So, they were allowed. In addition to that, as far as outward impurity is concerned, even Muslims

stand included under this restriction for they too, if in a state of full impurity (*janābah* or *ḥaiḍ* or *nifās*), are not allowed to enter the Sacred Mosque.

Besides, when according to the explanation given by the majority of commentators, *Al-masjid-al-ḥarām* at this place means the entire Ḥaram, then, that too lends support to the view that this prohibition is not based on outward impurity, instead, it is based on the impurity of *kufr* and *shirk*. It is for this reason that their entry was banned not simply in the Sacred Mosque, in fact, it was banned in the entire area known as the Ḥaram. This was done because the Ḥaram is the sanctuary and fortress of Islām and having some non-Muslim inside it cannot be tolerated.

To sum up the investigative approach of the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, it can be said that the concern for maintaining *masājid* in a state of perfect purity, free from all sorts of outward and inward pollution, is an issue of major importance having its proof from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. But, this verse is not connected with this problem. It is, in fact, connected with the particular political order of Islām that was announced at the beginning of Sūrah Al-Barā'ah and wherein the purpose was to have the sacred Ḥaram vacated by all Mushriks present in Makkah. But, such was the dictate of justice and mercy that all of them were not ordered to vacate immediately and en-block soon after the Conquest of Makkah. Instead of that, the plan was to be implemented within the time-span of one year by allowing people who had a treaty for a specified period to complete that period subject to its solemn fulfillment and by giving others available periods of respite. This is what was stated in the verse under study – that the entry of Mushriks will stand prohibited within the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram after that year and they would no more be able to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah in their polytheistic style.

After it was clearly stated in the 'āyāt of Sūrah Al-Taubah that no Mushrik would be able to enter the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram after Hijrah 9, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had increased this injunction to cover the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. Ḥadīth reports confirm it but its implementation could not take effect during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Then, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه remained unable to attend to it because of other emergent problems on

hand. It was Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه who, during his period, put this legal order in force.

As for the problem of the impurity of disbelievers and the problem of keeping *masājīd* secured from impurities of all kinds, that has its own place. These problems and their solutions have been taken up in books of Fiqh (Islāmic Jurisprudence). Details can be seen there. In brief, no Muslim can enter any *masjid* in the state of *najāsah* or *janābah*. As for disbelievers and Mushriks or the People of the Book, they too are not generally free and duly purified from these impurities, therefore, their entry too is not permissible in any *masjid*, unless needed acutely.

When, according to this verse, the entry of Kāfirs and Mushriks into the Ḥaram was banned, Muslims had to face an economic problem. Makkah had no produce of its own. Visitors from far and near brought the needed supplies with them. Thus, during the Ḥajj season, the people of Makkah found what they needed available locally. Now that their entry was banned, the Makkans worried, how things would work for them. In response, they were told in the Qur’ān: وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ (And if you apprehend poverty, then, Allah shall, if He wills, make you self-sufficient with His grace). In other words, the sense is: if you foresee any economic hardships, then, you must realize that the economic support of the entire creation rests with Allah Almighty. If He wills, He shall make you self-sufficient, free from any dependence on all those *kāfirs*. Incidentally, the restriction of ‘if He wills’ placed here does not mean that there is any doubt or hesitation in carrying out the Divine will. On the contrary, this is to point out that those who have their sights trained on nothing but material causes find it very difficult to understand and accept a situation like this. Here, the ground reality was that these non-Muslims were the apparent source of all economic support. Putting a ban on the entry of disbelievers amounted to nothing but a termination of the means of livelihood for believers. So, this restriction was placed to remove any such doubts and apprehensions. The strong message given to them was that Allah Ta‘ālā does not depend on material causes as such. When He intends to do something, all related causes start falling in line with His will. So, His will is what matters – the rest follows. Hence, *إِنْ شَاءَ* (*in sha’*) at the end of the sentence serves as a wise

indicator of this truth.

Verses 29 – 30

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ
مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾
وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرٌ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ
اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ
قَبْلُ قَتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Fight those who neither believe in Allah nor in the Last Day, nor take as prohibited what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor submit to the Faith of Truth – of those who were given the Book – until they pay *jizyah* with their own hands while they are humbled. [29]

And the Jews said, “Uzair (Ezra) is the Son of Allah” and the Christians said, “Masīh (the Christ) is the Son of Allah.” That is their saying (invented) by their mouths. They resemble the earlier disbelievers in their saying. Be they killed by Allah, how far turned away they are! [30]

Commentary

Verse 28 appearing earlier referred to Jihād against the Mushirks of Makkah. The present verses talk about Jihād against the People of the Book. In a sense, this is a prelude to the battle of Tabūk that was fought against the People of the Book. In Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr, it has been reported from the Qur’ān commentator, Mujāhid that these verses have been revealed about the battle of Tabūk. Then, there is the reference to ‘those who were given the Book.’ In Islāmīc religious terminology, they are referred to as ‘*ahl al-Kitāb*’ or People of the Book. In its literal sense, it covers every disbelieving group of people who believe in a Scripture but, in the terminology of the Holy Qur’ān, this term is used for Jews and Christians only – because, only these two groups from the People of the Book were well-known in and around Arabia. Therefore, addressing the Mushriks of Arabia, the Holy Qur’ān

has said:

أَنْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أُنْزِلَ الْكِتَابُ عَلَى طَائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا وَإِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغَافِلِينَ .

lest you should say, "The Book was sent down only upon two groups before us, and we were ignorant of what they studied."

– 6:156

As for the injunction of Jihād against the People of the Book given in verse 29, it is really not particular to the People of the Book. The fact is that this very injunction applies to all disbelieving groups – because, the reasons for the injunction to fight mentioned next are common to all disbelievers. If so, the injunction has to be common too. But, the People of the Book were mentioned here particularly to serve a purpose. Since, it was possible that Muslims may hesitate to fight against them on the ground that they too are believers in a certain degree, believers in Torah and Injil, and in Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Isā, may peace be upon them both. So, it was possible that their connection with past prophets and their Books may become a factor in dissuading them from Jihād. Therefore, fighting with them was mentioned particularly.

There is yet another element of coherence at this place. This particularization of the People of the Book in the verse is also releasing a hint that, in a certain way, these people are deserving of greater punishment. The reasons were simple. They were people with knowledge. They had the knowledge of Torah and Injil. These Scriptures referred to the Last among prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, giving his blessed identity in details. They knew all this, yet elected to reject the truth and went on to mount conspiracies against Islam and Muslims. When they did what they did, their crime became much more serious. That explains why fighting against them was mentioned particularly.

The injunction to fight spells out four reasons in this verse:

1. لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ : They do not believe in Allah.
2. وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ : They do not believe in the Hereafter.
3. لَا يَحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ : They do not take as prohibited what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited.

4. لَا يَدْرِيُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ : They do not submit to the Faith of Truth.

This raises a doubt. Is it not that the People of the Book, that is, the Jews and Christians, obviously believe in Allah – and in Hereafter and a Last Day too? Why, then, their faith (ʿImān) in these things has been negated? The reason is that mere words of faith are hardly sufficient to prove one's actual belief in it. Not having the kind of faith desirable in the sight of Allah would amount to having no faith at all. Of course, the Jews and Christians did not openly reject the belief in Tauḥīd, that is, oneness of Allah or pure monotheism. But, as says the next verse, the Jews took Sayyidnā ʿUzayr عليه السلام and the Christians took Sayyidnā ʿĪsā عليه السلام to be the sons of God and thereby assigned to them partnership in His divinity. Therefore, their confession of pure monotheism became ineffectual and any claim to faith, false.

Similarly, the kind of faith desirable in the Hereafter was something not to be found with the People of the Book. Many of them went by the belief that, on the Last Day (the Qiyāmah) there will be no return to life in body forms they had in the mortal world. Instead, it will be a kind of spiritual life. As for Paradise and Hell, they did not consider them to be any particular places. Spirit when happy was Paradise and spirit when gloomy was Hell. Since all this is patently contrary to what Allah says, therefore, even their faith in the Last Day too turns out to be no faith in real terms.

The third thing – that these people do not take, what Allah has declared to be unlawful, as unlawful – means that they do not believe in the unlawfulness of many things prohibited by Torah or Injīl – for example, *ribā* (interest). Similarly, there were many edibles prohibited in Torah and Injīl. They just did not consider these unlawful and indulged in them freely.

This tells us about a religious rule of conduct. According to this rule, taking anything declared unlawful by Allah Taʿālā as lawful is not simply the commitment of a sin, in fact, it is *kufr*, a flat rejection of the faith itself. Similarly, taking something lawful to be unlawful is also *kufr*. However, should someone inadvertently fall short in practice while still taking the unlawful as unlawful, then, that would be sin, not *kufr*.

Since all wars must end, a limit and end of the action of fighting

against those people has also been set forth in this verse where it has been said: حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ (until they pay *jizyah* with their own hands while they are humbled).

Literally, *jizyah* means return or recompense. In the terminology of the Shari'ah, it refers to the amount of money taken from disbelievers in lieu of killing.

The reason is that *kufir* and *shirk* are rebellion against Allah and *Rasul*. Killing is the real punishment for it. But, Allah Ta'ālā has, in His perfect mercy, reduced their punishment by giving them an option. The option is that, should they agree to live as subjects of the Islāmic state under the general Islāmic legal framework, they may be allowed to remain there against the payment of a nominal amount of *jizyah*. Since, they would be living there as citizens of a Muslim state, the protection of their life, property and honor will be the responsibility of the Islāmic government and no hindrance will be placed in the observance of their religious duties. The amount thus taken is called *jizyah*.

Should *jizyah* be fixed by mutual conciliation and agreement, there is no prescribed limit imposed by the Shari'ah. It accepts the amount and thing for which a mutual peace treaty is arrived at – as was done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the people of Najrān. A peace pact was concluded between him and the whole group of these people. They agreed to give him two thousand *hullahs* annually. A *hullah* is a pair of clothes. It could be a waist wrap for the lower part of the body with a top sheet wrap, or a long, loose shirt or cloak. Even the estimated monetary worth of every *hullah* was pre-determined. The value of each *hullah* was supposed to be one 'Uqiyah of silver. An 'Uqiyah is equal to approximately 122.472* grams of silver, according to our weights.

A similar agreement was reached between Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه and the Christians of Banī Taghlib which stipulated that the *jizyah* on them be levied at the rate of Islāmic Zakāh – but, twice the Zakāh.

Furthermore, in the event Muslims conquered a certain land through war, then allowed the properties of its residents to remain under their ownership and possession, and they too agreed to continue

living there as law-abiding citizens, a *jizyah* was levied on them. The rate of *jizyah* fixed and implemented by Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه during the period of his Khilāfah was four *dirhams* from the rich, two *dirhams* from the middle class and only one *dirham* from the active poor who earned by working on wages, or by making or vending things. This monthly payment of one *dirham* was equal to about 3.618 grams* of silver or its equivalent amount. According to rules, nothing was to be taken from the very poor, disabled or handicapped. Similarly, nothing was to be taken from women, children, aged people and religious leaders living in seclusion.

These were small amounts, yet there were instructions from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that no one should be made to pay more than he could afford. If anyone oppressed a non-Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself will support that non-Muslim against his oppressor on the day of Qiyamah (Maẓharī)

Reports such as these have led some Muslim jurists to hold the position that there is no particular rate of *jizyah* payment as fixed by the Shari‘ah. Instead, this has been left for the ruler of the time to determine the appropriate action in terms of existing conditions.

The comments appearing above also make it clear that *jizyah* is a compensation for removing the punishment of killing from disbelievers – not a substitute for Islām. Therefore, there is no justification for doubting as to why were they given the permission to keep staying on their policy of aversion from and denial of Islām for a paltry price. The proof is that permission is given to many other people also who live in an Islāmic country with the freedom to keep observing the percepts of their religion. *Jizyah* is not taken from them – for example, women, children, the aged, religious leaders, the disabled and the handicapped. Had *jizyah* been taken in lieu of Islām, it should have been taken from these as well.

It should be noted that the paying of *jizyah* in this verse has been qualified with the words: عَنْ يَدٍ: ‘with their own hands.’ Here, the first word: عَنْ (‘an: with) denotes cause, and يَد (yad: hands) signifies power and subjugation. It means that the payment of this *jizyah* should not

1. Awzān-i-Shar‘iyyah, Haḍrat Maulanā Muftī Muḥammad Shafī.

be in the spirit of some voluntary contribution or charity. Instead of that, it has to be in the spirit of recognition and acceptance of Islāmic victory and of the willingness to live under it. (As in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) As for the later part of the sentence: وَهُمْ صُغُرُونَ (while they are humbled), it means, according to the explanation given by Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى, that they should subscribe to the common law of Islām and take the responsibility of remaining obedient to it. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Maḥzarī)

Regarding the instruction given in this verse that once these people have agreed to pay *jizyah*, fighting should be stopped, a little explanation may be useful. According to the majority of Muslim jurists, it includes all disbelievers – whether from the People of the Book or from those other than them. However, the Mushriks of Arabia stand excluded from it for *jizyah* was not accepted from them.

In the second verse (30), the subject taken up briefly in verse 29 (where it was said that these people do not believe in Allah) has been enlarged. In the second verse, it has been said that the Jews take Sayyidnā 'Uzayr عليه السلام to be the Son of God.¹ So do the Christians. They say that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is the Son of God. Therefore, their claim that Allah is One and that they have faith turns out to be false.

After that, it was said: ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ. (That is their saying [invented] by their mouths). This could also mean that these people profess it openly and clearly through their own tongues. There is nothing secret about it. Then, it could also mean that this blasphemy they utter remains the work of their tongues. They can give no reason or justification for it.

Finally, it was said: مُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ قَتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَلَمْ يُؤْفَكُوا (They resemble the earlier disbelievers in their saying. Be they killed by Allah, how far turned away they are!). It means that the Jews and Christians, by calling prophets sons of Allah, became the same as disbelievers and Mushriks of past ages, for they used to say that the angels, and their idols, Lāt and Manāt, were daughters of God.

1. This is not the belief of all the Jews; it was the belief of some Jews of the Arabia. Now, the Dead Sea Scrolls have also proved the fact that some Jewish sects believed Ezra to be the son of God. It is learnt from some scholars who have studied the Scrolls. والله اعلم (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Verses 31 - 35

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَنَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَن يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّا كَثِيرٌ مِّنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لِيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيُصَدِّقُونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ يَوْمَ يُحْمَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنْزْتُمْ لِنَفْسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

They have taken their rabbis and their monks as gods beside Allah, and also (they have taken) Masiḥ the son of Maryam (as god). And they were not commanded but to worship only One God. There is no god but He. Pure is He from what they associate with Him. [31]

They want to blow out the Light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah rejects everything short of making His light perfect, no matter how the disbelievers may hate it. [32]

He is the One who has sent down His Messenger with guidance and the Faith of Truth, so that He makes it prevail over every faith, no matter how the associators may hate it. [33]

O those who believe, many of the rabbis and the monks do eat up the wealth of the people by false means and prevent (them) from the way of Allah. As for those who accumulate gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them the 'good' news of a painful

punishment, [34] on the day it will be heated up in the fire of Jahannam, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it: "This is what you had accumulated for yourselves. So, taste what you have been accumulating." [35]

Commentary

The four verses cited above mention how astray the learned and the devoted and the abstaining among the Jews and Christians had gone and what blasphemies of word and deed they had come up with. The word: اِحْبَار (*aḥbār*) is the plural form of حَبْر (*ḥibr*) and رُهْبَان (*ruhbān*) is the plural of رَاهِب (*rāhib*). *Ḥibr* refers to a religious scholar among the Jews and Christians while a *rāhib* denotes someone who devotes to worship and abstains from a worldly role in life.

In the first verse (31), it has been said that these people have taken their rabbis and monks as gods beside Allah and they have done the same with Sayyidnā 'Īsā ibn Maryam عليه السلام whom they have given the status of their Lord. This is, of course, obvious in the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام whom they took to be the son of God and did not demur from saying so. As for the charge against them that they had taken their rabbis and monks as gods, it has its reason. They used to call them as their Lord in clear terms, but even if it is presumed that they did not believe their religious leaders to be their gods, they had virtually transferred to them the right to be obeyed which is the right of Allah *Jalla Thanā'uh*, absolutely and exclusively. They would, so to say, follow the dictates of these leaders under all circumstance – even if their dictates happen to be against Allah and His Messenger. With that attitude, one is bound to land in a valley of no return. How can one go about obeying someone even if that person says things contrary to the dictates of Allah and His Messenger? And how can one who has reached this ultimate limit still not refuse to obey that person? This is like taking someone as god – an act of flagrant blasphemy, an open *kufr*.

This tells us that the present verse is not related in any way to the popular religious issue of following a particular juristic school (*taqlīd*) which has two main aspects. Firstly, common people who are not aware of religious precepts and their details trust 'Ulamā' and follow their *fatāwā*. Secondly, Mujtahid Imāms are followed in juristic issues

requiring Ijtihād. So, this verse has no bearing on that count because such following is, in real terms, nothing but the following of the dictates of Allah and His Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم. Those whom Allah has blessed with knowledge and insight have a direct access to the original resources of Shari'ah whereby they know what Allah and His Rasūl have said. They see it and act accordingly. The unaware masses act in accordance with the same injunctions by asking those who have knowledge. Then, there are those who have knowledge but are not competent enough to occupy the station of Ijtihād, they too follow the Mujtahid Imāms in matters requiring *ijtihād*. This following is in accordance with the injunction of the Holy Qur'an and is nothing but obedience to Allah Ta'ālā – as says the Qur'an: نَسْتَأْذِنُ أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ It means: 'If you yourself are not aware of the injunctions of Allah and the Messenger, act by asking the people of knowledge – 16:43.'¹

In sum, the masses of people among the Jews and Christians had ignored Scriptures, Divine commandments and the teachings of apostles totally and, in its place, they had taken the word and deed of self-serving scholars and ignorant pseudo-devotees as the core of their religion. This is what has been condemned in the verse.

Then, it was said that these people chose to take the way of error although they were asked by Allah to worship only one God who is free and pure from what they associated with Him. This verse limits itself to saying that they followed the false and obeyed people other than Allah, something they were not permitted to do. In the verse that follows (32), mentioned there is another error they make. It is said that they do not stop at the error they have already made. They, rather, like to compound their errors when they try to subvert Divine guidance and

-
1. The basic point of difference is that the one who follows an imām does not believe him to be an independent point of obedience. He simply consults him as an interpreter of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. That is why he will not follow him if there is a clear clash between his view and a clear-cut ruling given by the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. The case of Jews and Christians is totally different. They believe their religious leaders (rabbis and popes) as law-givers. They believe them to be infallible who cannot commit mistakes and their rulings are to be obeyed in any case, even though they contradict the ruling given by the scriptures. For more details on the subject, see my book on 'Taqlīd' or on 'Uloom al-Qur'an.' (Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī)

black out the Faith of Truth. The statement has been dressed in a similitude – ‘they want to blow out the Light of Allah with their mouths’ – although, this is something they cannot do. Allah Ta‘ālā has already decided that He shall see to it that His Light, that is, the Religion of Islām, reaches its perfection, no matter how displeasing this may turn out to be for those who disbelieve.

After that, the same subject has been further stressed in the third verse (33) by saying that Allah Ta‘ālā has sent His Messenger with guidance, that is, the Qur‘ān, and with the Faith of Truth, that is, Islām, in order to have it prevail over all other faiths. Appearing in almost the same words, there are several other verses of the Holy Qur‘ān promising that the religion of Islām shall be made to prevail over all other faiths of the world.

This glad tiding regarding the ascendancy of Islām is, as in Tafsīr Mazharī, for most times and circumstances. In a Ḥadīth from Sayyidina Miqdād رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: No mud or mortar home shall remain on the face of the earth where the word of Islām has not entered with the honor of the honored and the disgrace of the disgraced. Whoever Allah blesses with honor shall embrace Islām and whoever is to face disgrace shall not, though, accept Islām but shall become a subject of the Islāmic government. This promise of Allah Ta‘ālā was fulfilled. For about a thousand years, the primacy of Islām remained operative throughout the world.

How this Light of Allah reached its perfection during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the most righteous and worthy elders of the Muslim Community is a spectacle the world has already witnessed. Then, in future too, in terms of its legitimacy and truth for all times to come, the religion of Islām is a perfect religion no sensible person would elect to criticize. For this reason, this Faith of Truth, in terms of its arguments and proofs, has always been powerful. And, should Muslims follow this religion fully and faithfully, outward ascendancy, power and governance also turn out to be its inevitable results. As proved by the annals of the history of Islām, whenever Muslims acted whole-heartedly in accordance with the Qur‘ān and Sunnah, no impediment in their way could defeat their determination and their presence was felt all over the world as a dominant force. And whenever and wherever they have reached the limits of being subju-

gated or oppressed, it was but the evil consequence of heedlessness to and contravention of the injunctions of Qur'ān and Sunnah which came before them. As for the Religion of Truth, it stood its grounds as always, august and protected.

In the fourth verse (34), the address is to Muslims but the subject taken up concerns the conduct of rabbis and monks among the Jews and Christians, a conduct which led common people astray. Perhaps, the address to Muslims indicates a purpose behind the description of the conduct of Jewish rabbis and Christian monks. The purpose is to warn them as well in order that they too remain alert against such conditions prevailing among Muslims.

The verse states that many rabbis and monks among the Jews and Christians eat up the wealth of the people by false means and prevent (them) from the way of Allah.

Most rabbis and monks among the Jews and Christians were involved in this practice – and under such conditions, people generally tend to make a sweeping statement and call everyone bad. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān, by adding the word: كثيرا (*kathīra*: many), has prompted Muslims to mind their words even when dealing with enemies. It was clearly demonstrated here by not attributing the practice to all of them. Instead, what was said here was that many of them do so. Then, it was said that they were not doing the right thing when they eat up the wealth of people by false means. 'False means' refers to their practice of giving *fatwā* (religious edict or ruling) counter to the injunction of Torah, for money. In doing so, on occasions, they would misinterpret Divine injunctions through concealment and falsification. Further on from here, yet another error of their conduct was pointed out by saying that they were unfortunate people who, not only that they themselves had gone astray but were also ready to prevent others from seeking the way of Allah in the hope of finding right guidance. The reason is that people, when they see their leaders doing things like that, the inherent love for truth in them dies out. In addition to that, when they start basing their conduct on such false rulings, they end up taking that error and waywardness to be as good as correct.

Since this disease among the rabbis and monks of the Jews and Christians – that they give false rulings for money – showed up because of worldly greed and love for money, the verse takes up the sub-

ject in its own way. It says that excess in love for money and property produces bad results, even punishment if not spent in the way of Allah, and suggests how to get rid of this disease. The exact words of the text are:

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ
أَلِيمٍ .

As for those who accumulate gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them the 'good' news of a painful punishment.

The words: وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا (and do not spend it) indicate that people who spend in the way of Allah as necessary, for them the rest of their accumulated wealth brings no harm.

In Ḥadīth too, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: Wealth for which Zakāh has been paid is not included under: كَنْزْتُمْ (*kanaztum*: you have accumulated). (Abū Dāwūd, Aḥmad and others)

This tells us that keeping wealth which remains after taking out Zakāh is no sin.

The majority of Muslim jurists and Imāms have taken this approach. It should be noted that the pronoun in وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا (and do not spend it) reverts to نَفْصَة (*fiḍḍah*) which means silver. Two things, gold and silver, were mentioned immediately earlier but the pronoun was made to revert to silver only. Tafsīr Maḥzarī takes it to be a clear indicator of the rule that should a person have a little of both gold and silver, his threshold (*niṣāb*) will be determined in terms of silver. His Zakāh will be paid by calculating the price of gold in terms of the price of silver.

Explained in the fifth verse (35) is the detail of the 'painful punishment' referred to at the end of verse 34. There, it has been said: يَوْمَ يُخْتَلَىٰ عَلَيْنَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتَكْوَىٰ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَأُخْفَاؤُهُمْ. هَذَا مَا كَنْزْتُمْ لَا تَنْفِسُكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ (on the day it will be heated up in the fire of Jahannam, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it: "This is what you had accumulated for yourselves. So, taste what you have been accumulating". It means that this 'painful punishment' will be for those who do not pay Zakāh. It will come on a day when the gold and silver accumulated by them will be heated up in the Fire of Jahannam.

Then, their foreheads, sides and backs shall be branded with it, and they shall be told, as a sort of verbal punishment, that it was what they had accumulated for themselves, and in consequence, they better have a taste of what they had accumulated. The return of a deed is the deed itself. That which was accumulated illegally or that which was accumulated legally but without having paid its Zakāh ultimately became, by itself, the punishment of these people.

In this verse, mention has been made of branding foreheads, sides and backs. Either it means the whole body or these three parts have been particularized for the reason that a miser who does not like to spend his wealth in the way of Allah would usually greet a needy visitor looking for charity or Zakāh with a forehead all wrinkled with distaste. After that, when to avoid him, he tries to turn away to the right or the left side. And if the needy person still persists, he would turn his back on him. Perhaps, the forehead, the sides and the back were thus particularized for this punishment.

Verses 36 – 37

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ
خَلَقَ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ ۖ
فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا
يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً ۖ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ إِنَّمَا
النِّسْيُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ يُضِلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ
عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِيُتَاطَبَرُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوا
مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ ۚ زَيْنٌ لَهُمْ سُوءُ أَعْمَالِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Surely, the number of months according to Allah is twelve (as written) in the Book of Allah on the day He created the heavens and the Earth, of which there are Four Sacred Months. That is the right faith. So, do not wrong yourself therein. And fight the Mushriks* all together as they fight you all together, and be sure that

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

Allah is with the God-fearing. [36]

The postponement of the months is nothing but an increase in the infidelity whereby the disbelievers are misguided. They allow it one year and disallow it another year, so that they may conform (only) to the number of what Allah has sanctified, and allow what Allah has disallowed. Beautified for them is the evil of their deeds. And Allah does not lead the disbelieving people to the right path. [37]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses were the errors and misdeeds of disbelievers and Mushriks who persisted with their disbelief and kept associating others in the pristine divinity of Allah. In the present two verses, mentioned there is another bad custom prevailing in Arabia since its age of ignorance – which Muslims have been instructed to abstain from. That bad custom relates to a chain of happenings. Details go back to the distant past since when a year was accepted as having twelve months by the religious codes of all past prophets. Out of these twelve months, four were considered sacred, therefore, worthy of great reverence. They were three consecutive months of Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Hijjah, Muḥarram, and the month of Rajab.

All religious codes of past prophets agree that every act of worship during these four months is more reward-worthy – and should someone commit a sin during these months, the curse and punishment resulting from it is also more blameworthy. Under these past religious codes, fighting and killing was prohibited during these months.

Since the Arabs of Makkah al-Mukarramah are the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام through Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام, they all professed belief in Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm as a prophet and messenger of Allah and claimed to follow his Shari'ah. However, as fighting, killing and hunting was also prohibited during these four sacred months among the followers of the Ibrāhīmī community, the people of the Arab age of ignorance found the implementation of this injunction extremely hard. The reason was that, during the pagan period, fighting and killing had become the only vocation for them. Therefore, in order to make this restriction somewhat easy on them, they spun out all sorts of excuses to satisfy their self-serving motives. Whenever they needed

to fight during one of the sacred months, or whenever a sacred month approached while they were already fighting, then, they would say: This year, this month is not sacred. The next month will be the sacred one. For example, when Muḥarram arrived, they would say that 'this year, the month of Muḥarram is not sacred, instead of that, the month of Ṣafar will be sacred'. And if they had some other exigency, they would say, 'this year, the month of Rabī' al-Awwal will be sacred;' or say, 'this year the month of Ṣafar has come earlier and Muḥarram will come later.' Thus, in one stroke, they made the month of Muḥarram the month of Ṣafar! In short, they would somehow complete the count of four month during one year, but would not bother to retain the order and signification of what was divinely determined. It was up to them to give any name to any month, call it Dhu al-Ḥijjah or call it Ramaḍān or make one come earlier and make the other come later. If another emergency came, for example, when they would remain engaged in fighting for a period as long as ten months leaving only two months to the year, then, on this occasion, they would increase the number of months in a year saying, 'this year will be of fourteen months.' In this way, they would make the remaining four months the sacred months.

In short, they did show their reverence for the Ibrāhīmī faīth at least by doing it during four months of the year when they would abstain from fighting and killing. But, they did not observe the order of the months in a year according to which four of them were fixed as the sacred months. This was what they juggled with seeking interpretations to suit their needs or fancies.

The outcome was that, during those days, it had become difficult to determine as to which month was Ramaḍān or Shawwāl, or Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Ḥijjah or Rajab. When Makkah al-Mukarramah was conquered in the 8th year of Hijrah and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه to make the proclamation of withdrawal from disbelievers and Mushriks at the Ḥajj season of Hijrah year 9, this month was, according to the genuine calculation, the month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah. But, according to the same old custom of the Jāhiliyyah, this month was declared to be that of Dhu al-Qa'dah – and, that year, according to them, not Dhu al-Ḥijjah, but Dhu al-Qa'dah was fixed to be the month of Ḥajj. Then came the Hijrah year 10 which

was the year the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went for his last Ḥajj. As nature would have it, this brought about a unique arrangement when the genuine month was that of Dhu al-Ḥijjah and, according to the arbitrary reckoning of the people of Jāhiliyyah too, that turned out to be Dhu al-Ḥijjah itself. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said in his address at Mina: إِنَّ الزَّمَانَ قَدِ اسْتَدَارَ كَهَيْئَتِهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ (Time has come back to its position Allah had set the day He created the heavens and the Earth). It means that the month, the real month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah, turned out to be the same month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah that year, even in the sight of the people of Jāhiliyyah.

This was a window to the custom of Jāhiliyyah, a custom that changed the number, the order and the specification of months in a year, even made deletions and alterations at will. The activity of making a few changes here and there may appear to be small and innocuous. A month is a month, call it by any name, it remains a month. But, things were not that simple in the given situation. These changes disturbed the implementation of Islāmic laws connected with a particular month or a specific date in it. They also affected duties fixed for the beginning or the end of the year – such as, the injunctions of Ḥajj during the ten days of the month of Dhu al-Ḥijjah, fasting during the ten days of Muḥarram and the rules of Zakāh at the end of the year. As a direct result of this practice, hundreds of Islāmic laws were distorted making their compliance useless. In these two verses of the Holy Qurʾān, Muslims have been instructed to remain on guard against the evil in this pagan custom.

Explanation of the Verses

In the first verse (36), it is said: إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا (Surely, the number of months with Allah is twelve). Here, the word: عِدَّة (iddah) appears in the sense of number and شهور (shuhūr) is the plural of شهر (shahr) which means month. The sense of the verse is that the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is set as twelve. No one has the right to decrease or increase it.

Then, by placing the phrase: فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ (fī kitābillāh: as written in the Book of Allah), it was stressed that this numerical setting of the months stood recorded in the Preserved Tablet (al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz) since eternity. Then, by saying: يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ (on the day He created the heavens and the Earth), it was indicated that the Divine decree

was, though, promulgated in eternity, but this order and setting of the months came into being when the heavens and the Earth were created.

After that, it was said: مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ (of which there are Four Sacred Months). It means that, out of these twelve months, four are sacred. They have been called حرم : *hurum* (sanctified ones) in the sense that fighting and killing is prohibited during these month, and also in the sense that these months are blessed and it is obligatory to hold them in due esteem and that acts of worship during these become more reward worthy. The first injunction out of the two was abrogated in the Shari'ah of Islām. But, the second one, that of increased reverence, esteem and devotion to 'Ibādah during this period still remains operative in Islām.

In his address¹ of the Day of Sacrifice² during the Last Hajj³, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explained these months by saying: 'Three months are consecutive – Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Hijjah, Muḥarram – and one month is that of Rajab.' But, there were two sayings of the Arabs regarding the month of Rajab. Some tribes used to call the month we know as Ramaḍān the month of Rajab while, as seen by the tribe of Muḍar, Rajab was the month which comes in between Jumadā ath-Thāniah and Sha'bān. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – by mentioning this month as 'Rajab Muḍar' – also made it clear that it means the month of Rajab which is in between Jumadā ath-Thāniah and Sha'bān.

Thereafter appears the statement: ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ (That is the right faith). It means that keeping the setting and serial order of months, specially the injunctions pertaining to the Four Sacred Months, according to the very original decree of Allah Almighty is the right faith to hold. Making any changes, alterations, additions or deletions therein is a sign of crookedness in comprehension and temperament.

The next sentence: فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ (So, do not wrong yourselves therein) means: 'Do not become unjust to your own selves either by acting against the compliance-worthy injunctions pertaining to these

1. Khutbah.

2. Yowmu 'n-Nahr, a term used for 'Īdu 'l-Adḥā, the Feast or Festival of Sacrifice.

3. Hujjatu 'l-Wadā'.

months, or by not observing proper respect for them, or by falling short in devoting yourselves to 'Ibādah therein.

In his Aḥkāṁ al-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: The hint given here is that these blessed months have an exclusive characteristic of their own. Whoever devotes to 'Ibādah during these is awarded with the ability and encouragement to engage in it during the rest of the months. Similarly, a person who makes the necessary effort to stay safe from sins and other bad deeds during these months finds that remaining safe from these evils during the rest of the months of a year has become easier on him. Therefore, not making the best out of these months is a terrible loss.

Up to this point, the text has described and refuted a particular custom of Jāhiliyyah practiced by the Mushriks of Makkah. At the end of the verse, the text reverts to the command, given at the beginning of the verse (5), requiring that, soon after the expiry of the treaty deadline, Jihād is obligatory against all Mushriks and disbelievers.

The second verse (37) also refers to this very custom of Jāhiliyyah by saying: *إِنَّمَا النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ* (... is nothing but an increase in the infidelity). The word: *نَسِيءٌ* (*nasī*) is a verbal noun that means to move back or postpone. It is also used in the sense of that which is delayed (*mu'akhkhar*).

By putting these month back and forth, the Mushriks of Arabia thought, they would be achieving two things – that it will serve their material interests and that it would also give them the credit of complying with the Divine injunction. This approach was not approved by Allah Ta'ālā for their act of postponing and moving months from where they belonged was nothing but an addition to their stance of denial which was going to lead them further astray. That they go about declaring that a sacred month was not sacred in some year and then be ready to name it as sacred in some other year was simply unacceptable. The sentence: *لِيُكَوِّتُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ* (so that they may conform [only] to the number of what Allah has sanctified) following soon after means that a mere act of conforming to the given number cannot stand for the correct compliance of the injunction. The truth of the matter is that the month for which the injunction has been given should be the month in which the injunction must be carried out. This is imperative.

Injunctions and Rulings

The verses cited above prove that the order of months and the names by which they are known in Islām should not be taken as terms coined by human beings. In fact, the day the Lord of all the worlds created the heavens and the Earth, He had also settled this order and these names and, along with it, particular injunctions to be carried out during particular months. From here, we also come to know that, in all Islāmic legal injunctions, only lunar months are credible in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. In other words, all injunctions of the Shari'ah of Islām – such as, fasting, Hajj, Zakāh and many others – relate to the lunar calendar. But, when it comes to finding out the day, date and year, the way the Holy Qur'an has declared the Moon as its indicator, it has, very similarly, identified the Sun too as the other sign: **يَتْلَمَكُمَا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابِ** (so that you may know the number of years and the count [of time] – 10:5). Therefore, keeping track of days and years through a lunar or solar calendar is equally permissible. But, Allah Ta'ālā has favored the lunar calendar for His injunctions and has made it the pivot round which the laws of the Shari'ah of Islām revolve. Therefore, the preservation of the lunar calendar is Fard al-Kifāyah (a religious obligation which, if fulfilled by some, will absolve others). If the entire community of Muslims were to abandon the lunar calendar and forget all about it, then, everyone will be a sinner. However, if it remains viably preserved, the use of another calendar is also permissible – but, there is no doubt that it is against the way of Allah and the way of the worthy forbears of Islām – therefore, it is not good to opt for it unnecessarily.

The month intercalated to complete the count of years has also been considered by some as impermissible under this verse. But, that is not correct because the system of reckoning under which the intercalation of a month is made has nothing to do with the laws of the Shari'ah of Islām. The people of Jāhiliyyah changed these religious laws by adding to the lunar and legal months, therefore, they were censured. As for the practice of intercalation, it does not affect Islāmic legal injunctions, therefore, it is not included under this prohibition.

Verses 38 – 42

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَالَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ أَنْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

اِنَّا قُلْتُمْ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ ۚ اَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ
 فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ اِلَّا تَنْفِرُوْا
 يُعَذِّبُكُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۚ وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَنْصُرُوْهُ
 شَيْئًا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِلَّا تَنْصُرُوْهُ فَقَدْ
 نَصَرَهُ اللّٰهُ اِذْ اَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ثٰنِيْ اٰثْنَيْنِ اِذْ هُمَا فِي
 الْغَارِ اِذْ يَقُوْلُ لِصَاحِبِهٖ لَا تَحْزَنْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَنَا ۚ فَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
 سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلَيْهِ وَاَيَّدَهٗ بِجُنُوْدٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِيْنَ
 كَفَرُوْا السُّفٰلٰى ۚ وَكَلِمَةَ اللّٰهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ
 ﴿٤٠﴾ اِنْفِرُوْا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَاهِدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ فِيْ
 سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ
 عَرَضًا قَرِيْبًا وَسَفَرًا قٰصِدًا لَّا تَّبَعُوْكَ وَلٰكِنْ بَعْدَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ
 الشُّقَّةُ ۚ وَسَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَوِ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ
 يَهْلِكُوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾

O those who believe, what is wrong with you that when it is said to you, "Come out in the way of Allah," you turn heavy (and cling) to the ground. Have you become happy with the worldly life instead of the Hereafter? So, the enjoyment of the worldly life is but little as compared with the Hereafter. [38]

If you do not come out (in the way of Allah), He will punish you with a painful punishment and will bring in your place a nation other than you, and you can do Him no harm at all. And Allah is powerful over everything. [39]

If you do not help him, then, Allah has already helped him when the disbelievers expelled him, the second of the two, when they were in the cave, and he was saying to his companion, "Do not grieve. Allah is surely with us." So, Allah sent down His tranquility on him and strengthened him with troops you did not see, and rendered the word of the disbelievers low. And the word of

Allah is the highest. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. [40]

Come out (in the way of Allah), light or heavy, and carry out *jihād* with your wealth and lives, in the way of Allah. That is good for you, if you were to realize. [41]

If there had been some gain near at hand and an average journey, they would have certainly followed you, but the difficult destination was too far for them. And they will swear by Allah: "If we could, we would have set out with you." They are ruining themselves. And Allah knows that they are liars. [42]

Commentary

The verses quoted above describe an important battle from among those fought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. As a corollary, also given there are many injunctions and instructions. This battle is known as the battle of Tabūk and is almost the last battle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Tabūk is the name of a place located close to the Syrian border towards the north of Madīnah. Syria was, at that time, a province of the government controlled by Byzantine Christians. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reached Madīnah in the 8th year of Hijrah after the conquest of Makkah and the battle of Hunain, that was a time major parts of the Arabian Peninsula had come under the control of the Islāmic state. This was a period of some peace Muslims could enjoy after their eight year long battles against the Mushriks of Makkah.

But, destiny has its own workings. Is it not that Allah had already revealed about the blessed person of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: يُظْهِرُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ (so that He makes it prevail over every faith – 9:33, 48:28, 61:9) which was the glad tidings of a world of victories and the ascendancy of the Faith of Truth? The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his companions in the mission would hardly have the respite to relax. Soon after they reached Madīnah, Syrian traders of olive oil informed them that the Byzantine ruler, Hiraql had assembled his forces at Tabūk on the border of Syria. They were also told that soldiers of the Byzantine army had been placated by the payment of advance salaries for one year and that they had sinister understanding with some Arab tribes and that they all had plans to mount a surprise attack on Madīnah.

When this information reached the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he

decided that their attack plans should be pre-empted and they should be challenged where they are gathered together with their forces.

(Tafsir Mazhari, with reference to Muḥammad ibn Yusūf Ṣāliḥī)

By chance, this was a terribly hot summer. People in Madīnah were generally devoted to agriculture. Their farms were close to being harvested. On this depended their economy, rather the sustenance of the whole year. Like people in vocations who have empty pockets by the end of the month, people who depend on agricultural produce are empty-handed close to the harvesting time. On the one hand, they have poverty while on the other, they have hopes of income in the near future. Then, there was this scorching heat of the summer for a people who had their first breather after eight years of incessant wars. No doubt, this was an exacting trial.

But, equally crucial was the time. This Jihād was different. It was not like the wars they had fought before. At that time, they were fighting common people like them. Here, they were to confront the trained armed forces of Hiraql, the ruler of Byzantine. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered all Muslims of Madīnah to come out for this Jihād. He also invited some other tribes living around Madīnah to join in.

This general call was a tough test for those who were willing to make sacrifices for Islām as well as a challenge to the hypocrites who would have to prove their claim to be Muslims by joining the Jihād or be exposed as false pretenders. Apart from this consideration, the inevitable consequence was that those who professed belief in Islām reacted to the call in terms of the conditions they were in. The Holy Qur'an has enumerated them as separate groups of people and has pointed out to their condition as well.

The first group included those who were strong and perfect in their faith. They were ready for Jihād without any hesitation. The second group was composed of those who hesitated at the initial stage but, later on, joined up with those ready for Jihād. About these two groups of people, the Holy Qur'an said: *الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ فَرِيقٍ* (The Holy Qur'an said: ... who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked – 9:117). The third group was of those who were unable to join this Jihād on the basis of some genuine excuse. About that, by saying: *لَيْسَ عَلَى الضَّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى* (There is no

blame on the weak, nor on the sick – 9:91), the Holy Qurʾān has announced the acceptance of their excuse. Belonging to the fourth group were people who, despite that they had no excuse to offer, simply did not participate in the Jihād out of sheer laziness. Several verses were revealed about them, for example: *اٰخَرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ* (And there are others who admitted their sins – 9:102), and: *اٰخَرُونَ مُّرْجَوْنَ لِامْرِ اللَّهِ* (And there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah [comes] – 9:106), and: *وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلَفُوا* (And [He relented] towards the three whose matter was deferred – 9:118). These three verses were revealed about similar people. They carry admonition for their inertia as well as the good news that their Taubah or repentance has been accepted.

The fifth group was that of the hypocrites, the *munāfiqs*. Their hypocrisy was deep seated and saying yes to Jihād was hard. Finally, they failed to cover it up and stayed away from Jihād. Hypocrites have been mentioned in the verses of the Qurʾān on many places.

The sixth group included *munāfiqs* who had joined up with Muslims with the objective of spying and mischief making. The Holy Qurʾān mentions their conduct in the following verses:

- {1} *وَفِيكُمْ سَمْعُونَ لَهُمْ* (And among you there are their listeners – 9:47);
- {2} *وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ* (And if you ask them, they will say – 9:65);
- {3} *وَهُمْؤَا مَا لَمْ يَنَالُوا* (And had planned for what they could not achieve – 9:74).

Given above were details about those who stayed away from the Jihād. But, the fact is that their total number was negligible. The majority did belong to those Muslims who, despite many prohibitive factors, chose to sacrifice all gains and comforts and were ready to face expected hardships in the way of Allah. This is the reason why the total number of the Islāmic army which set out for this Jihād was thirty thousand – a number never seen in a Jihād before.

The outcome of this Jihād expedition was that Hiraql, the Byzantine ruler – when he heard about such a large Muslim force coming up against him – was overtaken by awe. He simply did not turn up on the battlefield. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم camped on the war front with the army of his angelic companions for a few days in the hope that the enemy may decide to come. When totally disappointed, he returned back to Madīnah.

The verses quoted above obviously relate to the fourth group of people who did not take part in the Jihād because of their inertia and without any valid excuse. In the beginning of this set of verses, they were admonished for their lethargy, then, they were told why they behaved the way they did and, finally, they were told how to correct themselves. This wise approach unfolds major lessons.

Regard for *Dunyā* and Disregard for *Ākhirah*:

The Root of all Crimes

No doubt, what has been said above is related to a particular event. But, if we were to think about it, we shall realize that the real cause of negligence towards faith - and of every crime and sin - is nothing but this love for the material and heedlessness towards the life to come. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: *حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيئَةٍ* (The love for *Dunyā* [material life of the present world] is at the top of every error and sin). That is why it was said in the verse:

O those who believe, what is wrong with you that, when it is said to you, "Come out in the way of Allah," you turn heavy (and cling) to the ground. Have you become happy with the worldly life instead of the Hereafter? - 38.

This was the diagnosis of the disease. Its treatment appears next when it was said:

So, the enjoyment of the worldly life is but little as compared with the Hereafter - 38.

The thrust of the argument is that one's major concern in life should be that of the eternal life in *Ākhirah*. It is this concern for the *Ākhirah* that offers the only and the most perfect treatment of all diseases. Incidentally, this also happens to be the master prescription for eradication of crimes that bother human societies all over the world.

The 'Aqā'id of Islām (articles of faith) are based on three principles: (1) Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah); (2) Risālah (the true mission of the messenger and prophet sent by Allah) and (3) *Ākhirah* (Hereafter). Out of these, the belief in *Ākhirah* is, in all reality, the moving spirit for correction of deeds and serves as an iron wall before crimes and sins. A little thought would make it amply clear that there can be no peace in the world without subscribing to this belief. The world as we see it today has reached its zenith in terms of its material progress. Then,

there is no dearth of functional solutions and plans designed to eradicate crimes. Laws proliferate. So does the administrative machinery to interpret and implement the objective. No doubt, there is progress in those terms. But, along with it, everyone is witnessing crimes increasing day by day, everywhere, in all societies. The reason, in our humble view, is no other but that the disease has not been properly diagnosed and the line of treatment is not sound. The root of the disease is materialism, excessive indulgence in the temporal and negligence or avoidance of the thought of any life to come. The only way this frame of mind can be corrected is to remember Allah and think about the Akhīrah, the life to come. Whenever and wherever in this world this master prescription was used, whole nations and their societies became models of humanity at its best earning the admiration of angels. That this happened during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and during the age of his noble Companions, is sufficient as its proof.

It is interesting that the modern world would very much like to eradicate crimes but it would do so by not having to bother about God and the Hereafter. To achieve this purpose, it invents, introduces and surrounds itself with things to live with – a lifestyle which would never allow human beings to turn their attention towards God and Hereafter. The result of this negative approach is no mystery. We are watching it with our own eyes. Even in the face of ever better laws, all legal systems seem to be failing. Crimes are there as they were, in fact, they are increasing with dangerous speed. To conclude, we wish that intelligent people among countries and nations of the world would think of using this Qur'ānic prescription, at least for once, and discover for themselves how easily crimes can be controlled.

Now, as we move to the second verse (39), the text has, after serving a notice of warning to the lazy and the listless about their disease and its treatment, delivered its verdict by saying:

'If you do not come out for Jihād, Allah will have you go through a painful punishment and bring in your place a nation other than you, and (by your refusal to follow Islām) you can bring no loss to Allah (or His Messenger) because Allah is powerful over everything.'

In the third verse (40), by citing the event of the Hijrah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it has been stressed that the Rasūl of Allah has no need to

depend on any human help and support. Allah can help him directly through unseen factors – as it happened at the time of Hijrah when his own people had forced him to leave his homeland. On this journey, the only companion he had was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, the true one. Enemy foot soldiers and riders were looking for them in hot pursuit. The place to hide he had found was no fortified fortress. It was just a cave and the enemy search party had reached close to its edges. Inside it, the companion of the cave, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه was worried, not for his own safety, but about his master. He was in fear lest the enemy outside were to harm the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But, the master himself was sitting calm like a mountain at peace. Not simply that he was himself cool and collected, he was telling his companion, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr: لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا ('*lā taḥzan innallāha ma'anā*': Do not grieve. Allah is with us).

What has been said here is composed of a couple of words, easy and effortless as they sound. But, let those listening place the blueprint of conditions prevailing before their eyes, cross their hearts and ask: Can someone dependent on mere material means be that tranquil? Every honest person would say that it was just not possible. The reason for this was no other but that which the Qur'an has given in the next sentence:

So, Allah sent down His tranquility on him and strengthened him with troops you did not see ...

These troops could be troops of angels, and of the elemental forces of the entire universe too – for they are, so to say, a virtual army of Allah. When this happened, the ultimate came to be. The word of disbelievers was rendered low and the word of Allah remained the highest.

In the fourth verse (41), the command given earlier has been repeated for emphasis. It is being said here that, once the Prophet of Allah orders people to come out for Jihād, they must come out as a matter of absolute obligation – for on the compliance of this command hinges all that is good for them.

The fifth verse (42) mentions an excuse offered by those who did not participate in the Jihād because of negligence and lethargy. It was rejected as unacceptable because they did not use the ability given by Allah to pick and choose the right thing to do in His way. Therefore, the excuse of not having that ability is not valid.

Verses 43 - 52

عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ لِمَ أَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا
وَتَعْلَمَ الْكَذِبِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أَنْ يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ
بِالْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾
وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لَأَعَدُّوا لَهُ عُدَّةً وَلَكِنْ كَرِهَ اللَّهُ انْبِعَاثَهُمْ
فَتَبَطَّاهُمْ وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ أَفْعَدُّوا مَعَ الْفَاعِلِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُمْ
مَازَادُوكُمْ إِلَّا خَبَالًا وَلَا أُوْضِعُوا لَكُمْ خِلَالَكُمْ يَبْغُونَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ
وَفِيكُمْ سَمْعُونُ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ لَقَدْ ابْتَغُوا
الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَقَلَبُوا لَكَ الْأُمُورَ حَتَّى جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ أَمْرُ
اللَّهِ وَهُمْ كَرِهُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَقُولُ أَئِذْنَ لِي وَلَا تَفْتِنِي
إِلَّا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوا وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ إِنْ
تُصِيبَكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِنْ تُصِيبَكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُوا قَدْ أَخَذْنَا
أَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا
إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ
الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ قُلْ هَلْ تَرْتَضُونَ بِنَا إِلَّا إِحْدَى الْحُسْنَيْنِ
وَنَحْنُ نَتَرْتَضُ بِكُمْ أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ أَوْ
بِأَيْدِينَا فَتَرْتَضُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُتَرْتَضُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

Allah has forgiven you; why did you permit them before the truthful ones could become distinct to you, and you could be sure of the liars. [43]

Those who believe in Allah and in the Last Day do not ask you to be excused from *jihād* with their wealth and lives. And Allah is aware of the God-fearing. [44]

Only those people ask you to be excused who do not believe in Allah and in the Last Day and whose hearts are in doubt, so they are wavering in their doubt. [45]

And had they wished to set out, they would have made some preparation for it, but Allah disliked their going forth, so He detained them, and it was said to them, "Stay back with those who are staying back." [46]

And had they set out with you, they would have added nothing for you but trouble, and would have run around in your midst seeking disorder for you. And among you there are their listeners. And Allah is aware of the wrongdoers. [47]

They sought disorder even earlier and tried to upset matters for you, until the Truth arrived and the will of Allah prevailed, though they disliked it. [48]

And among them there is one who says, "Allow me (to stay behind) and do not expose me to an ordeal." Look! They have already fallen into an ordeal, and certainly the Jahannam has the disbelievers encircled. [49]

If some good comes to you, it annoys them, and if some suffering visits you, they say, "We had already taken care of our problem" and they go their way delighted. [50]

Say, "Nothing can ever reach us except what Allah has written for us. He is our Master. And in Allah alone the believers must place their trust." [51]

Say, "Is it not that you are expecting for us but one of the two good things (martyrdom and victory)? And we are expecting for you that Allah sends to you a punishment from Himself or at our hands. So, wait. Of course, we are waiting with you. [52]

Commentary

Mentioned in most of the seventeen verses of this entire section are hypocrites who had, on false pretexts, secured permission from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that they would not go to participate in the Jihād of Tabūk. Falling under it, there are many injunctions, rulings and instructions that have been pointed out in the commentary.

The first verse (43) begins in a subtle manner. Here, a complaint has been made to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He has been told that those hypocrites were lying when they presented themselves as deserving of being excused from active service in Jihād. But, he accepted their plea without first having made an inquiry about the real state of

affairs with them which would have made the true and false of it come out clearly. This gave them the opportunity to go about congratulating themselves on how smartly they had deceived the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Though, in verses coming next, Allah Ta'ālā has also clarified that those people were asking to be excused from Jihād just to play tricks – otherwise, even if they were not permitted, still then, they would have never gone. And in another verse, it was also pointed out that, in case these people did go to this Jihād, it would have been of no use to Muslims – in fact, their conspiracy and mischief would have been far more dangerous.

But, the drift of the argument is that, in case, permission was not given, they were still not going to go anyway – however, their hypocrisy would have definitely been exposed and they would not have had the opportunity to throw taunts at Muslims and exult that they had fooled them. And the real purpose here is not to show wrath or displeasure, instead of that, it is a way of saying that, in future, the motives and moves of such people should be watched and screened carefully. Then, it can be conceded that there does exist a certain kind of displeasure in the external framework of words but it has been coated with a delightful concern for sensitivities, particularly that of his dear prophet. We can see that the expression of displeasure which begins with the words: لِمَ أَذْنُتْ لَهُمْ (why did you permit them?) does not actually begin until said ahead of it was: عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ (Allah has forgiven you)!

It has been said by people having insight in the nature of God-Prophet relationship that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had a special attachment to Allah *Jalla Thanā'uh*. His heart could not simply bear the shock of being in a situation where he is subjected to questioning from Allah Ta'ālā. For instance, if the words: لِمَ أَذْنُتْ لَهُمْ (why did you permit them?) – which translate as interrogation in their formal appearance – were said in the very beginning, the blessed heart of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would have been simply unable to take it. Therefore, the words: عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ (Allah has forgiven you) have been placed earlier. This serves two purposes. Firstly, it gives him the information that something has happened, something that was not liked by Allah. Secondly, the information that he has been forgiven for whatever had happened was being given beforehand so that what is said next should not break his blessed heart.

As for the word of forgiveness, let there be no doubt about it and let no one say that forgiveness is usually given for crimes and sins – and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was *ma'sūm* (protected from sin) – what, then, would be the sense of forgiveness at this place? The answer is that the way there is forgiveness for sin, similarly, there could also be forgiveness for what is contrary to the preferred way (*khilāf al-awlā*) or is simply undesirable – and that does not violate the concept of the *'iṣmah* (infallibility) of a prophet.

In the second (44) and third (45) verses given there was the difference between believers and hypocrites. Those who believe in Allah Ta'ālā truly and staunchly do not pick an occasion like that only to seek desertion from Jihād just for the sake of love for their lives and wealth and go about asking the permission of their prophet to stay back. In fact, this is the behavior of only those who do not believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement (*Ākhirah*), truly and correctly – and, as for Allah, He knows the God-fearing perfectly well.

At least, one aspect of why their excuse was false has been given in the fourth (46) where it has been said: وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لَأَعَدُّوا لَهُ عُدَّةً (And had they [really] wished to set out [for Jihād], they would have [of necessity] made [at least] some preparation for it [but they made none] – 46). This shows that the plea of having an excuse was false. The truth of the matter was that they just did not have any intention to come out for Jihād.

How do we know if an excuse is reasonable or unreasonable?

An important principle comes out from this verse, a principle that can be used to distinguish between a reasonable and an unreasonable excuse. To wit, an excuse presented only by those who are ready to carry out orders – but, were rendered helpless by some accident – can be entertained and accepted. This rule applies to all matters pertaining to the excusable. As for a person who made no preparation to carry out orders, did not even make the intention to carry them out when called, thereafter, came some excuse – then, this excuse will be like the excuse of sin which is worse than the sin. This will not be taken as a genuine excuse. Take the example of a person who has made all preparations to present himself in the *masjid* for his Jumu'ah prayers and is intending to go there when, all of a sudden, came an impediment which prevented him from going there. Then, his excuse is rea-

sonable – and Allah Ta‘ālā blesses such a person with the full reward of his ‘Ibādah (worship). As for the person who just did not make any preparation but, later on, by chance, there came an excuse before him, then, this will be taken as nothing but a ruse and pretext.

Take an example from everyday life. One makes the necessary preparations to get up early in the morning and get ready for the Fajr Ṣalāh. An alarm was set in the family clock, or somebody was assigned to give a wake-up call. After that, by chance, whatever arrangements were made did not work – and because of this, the Ṣalāh was missed. This is similar to what happened to the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he camped on a journey late at night (*lailatu ‘t-ta’rīs*). In order to get up on time for Fajr Ṣalāh, he arranged with Sayyidnā Bilāl رضى الله عنه that he would sit the night out and wake up everybody when morning comes. But, by chance, sleep overtook him too. Everyone got up only when the sun had risen. So, this excuse is correct and reasonable. Based on this, consoling his Companions, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لَا تَغْرِطُ فِي النَّوْمِ إِنَّمَا التَّغْرِطُ فِي الْبَيْقَظِ (There is no negligence in sleep. Negligence occurs only when awake) that is, one is excusable in sleep. The reason was that, as far as it was possible to do, arrangements had already been made to get up on time.

In short, a decision about an excuse being reasonable or unreasonable can be taken only by knowing whether or not preparation was made to carry out orders. Simply using a lot of words to make a point gets nothing done.

In the fifth (47) verse, it was explained that the hypocrites had procured the permission to stay away from Jihād by deceit and now it was better that they just did not participate in it. Had they gone there, they would have done nothing but hatch conspiracies, circulate rumors and spread disorder. The Qur’ānic statement: وَفِيكُمْ سَمْعُونَ لَهُمْ (And among you there are their listeners) means that, among Muslims, there were some simple people too, people who could be easily taken advantage of and who may have likely been affected by their false rumors.

The opening sentence of the sixth verse (48): لَقَدْ ابْتَغُوا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ (They sought disorder even earlier...) refers to what had happened in the battle of ‘Uḥud.

The statement: وَظَهَرَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ كَرَاهُونَ (... and the will of Allah prevailed,

though they disliked it) at the end of the verse indicates that victory is in the hands of Allah. This has been proved on earlier occasions when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was blessed with victory. The same will happen in this Jihād as well when all tricks played by hypocrites will fail.

In the seventh verse (49), after citing a particular excuse made by a noted hypocrite called Jadd ibn Qays, a comment has been made which shows how astray he had gone. The excuse for not going on Jihād he came up with was that he happened to be a young man. If he went out against the Roman Christians in their territory, there were chances that he might fall into the snare of their beautiful women! ('Do not expose me to an ordeal') The Qur'an responded by saying: **أَلَا نَىٰ** (Look! they have already fallen into an ordeal). It means that such people were not very smart. They were trying to hide behind the excuse of an imaginary ordeal, not realizing that they had already fallen into the sin of a certain ordeal, the ordeal of acting against the command of Allah and His Messenger, and of deserting the Jihād effort, right on the spot.

The last sentence of the verse: **وَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ** (and certainly the Jahannam has the disbelievers encircled) could have two meanings. It could either mean that the Hell would encircle them in the Hereafter. Or, it could mean that the very chain of causes, which are operating to take them to Hell, and which have them all encircled at that time, are what has been equated with Hell. Given this interpretation, it would suggest that they happen to be, even now, within the larger circle of nothing but Hell.

In the eighth verse (50), yet another aspect of their low nature has been mentioned by saying that, though these people live among Muslims giving the outward impression that they are one of them, but they are soon exposed by their inner reactions to what happens to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The text illustrates it by saying: **إِنْ تُصِيبَكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ** (If some good comes to you, it annoys them) and: **وَأَنَّ تُصِيبَكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُوا قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرًا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ فَرِحُونَ** (and if some suffering visits you, they say, "We had already taken care of our problem"). They would take it as expedient in their favor that they did not go along with Muslims and found the results satisfying enough to go away delighted.

In the ninth verse (51), Allah Ta'ālā has instructed the Holy Prophet

ﷺ, and Muslims, that they should not allow themselves to be affected by things like that said by the hypocrites and that they must always keep reality as it is before them. The words of the Holy Qur'an are: قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (Say, "Nothing can ever reach us except what Allah has written for us. He is our Master. And in Allah alone the believers must place their trust"). In other words, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is being asked that he should tell those, who worship material causes such as these, that they were in a serious deception. These material causes were no more than a curtain. The power that moves inside them belongs to none but Allah. Whatever happens to us is exactly whatever Allah has written for us – and He is our Master, Guardian and Helper. And Muslims must place their real trust in Him alone. Consequently, they must see material causes as no more than effective agents and signs while never taking them to be the real dispensers of any good or evil.

Belief in Destiny includes Management of affairs: Giving Inaction or Mismanagement the name of Trust is Wrong

This verse (51) brings into sharp focus the essential reality of the religious issue of Taqdīr (destiny) and Tawakkul (trust). The outcome of believing in Taqdīr and Tawakkul should never be that one goes home, sits tight, does nothing and says what will be will be. This is no belief in destiny and this is no practice of trust. Instead, the thing to do is that one should devote full personal energy and courage to put together whatever lawful material means one can arrange for – within the range of what lies in control. After this has been done, the matter should be resigned to destiny and trust. However, the caveat is that one has to keep his or her sight trained toward Allah alone – for it is He who has the ultimate outcome of everything one does under His absolute power and control.

Speaking generally, people around the world are found in great confusion about the religious problem of Taqdīr and Tawakkul. Some of them are plain irreligious. They just do not recognize the very possibility that something like that exists. They are content with material means as the deity they are comfortable with. Then, there are other people who lack proper awareness. They have turned destiny and trust into a pretext for their sloth and inertia. The Prophet of Islām, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, made full preparation for

Jihād, after which, the revelation of this verse put an end to this cycle of excess and deficiency and showed the right way – as put in the lively Persian saying: بر توکل زانوے اشتر به بند (With Tawakkul [trust], do tie the knees of the camel). To sum up, means which you have the option to utilize, are nothing but blessings given by Allah Ta‘ālā. Not taking advantage of these means is ingratitude, even stupidity. Of course, do not give means the status they do not have and believe that results and outcomes are not subservient to these means – instead of all that, they obey the command of Allah Almighty.

The tenth verse (52), while mentioning the charming demeanor of the man of true faith, has given an answer to hypocrites delighted over the discomfort of Muslims. According to the man of true faith, the thing that hypocrites take as suffering for Muslims and which makes them happy is really no suffering for them. In fact, it is another form of comfort and success. The reason is that a man of true faith becomes deserving of eternal returns and rewards even after having failed in his strong resolve, something that is the real objective of all his successes. Therefore, he succeeds, even in failure and gains, even in loss.

The first sentence of the verse: هَلْ تَرْتَضُونَ بِنَا إِلَّا إِحْدَى الْحُسَيْنَيْنِ (Say, “Is it not that you are expecting for us but one of the two good things [martyrdom and victory]”?) means exactly this. However, along with it, it was also said that the fate of the disbelievers was quite contrary for they will find no respite from suffering or punishment under any condition. Either, they would be punished at the hands of Muslims right here in this world, in which case, they will taste the punishment in the mortal and the eternal world both. And, in case, they somehow escaped unscathed in the mortal world, there is no possibility of deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter.

Verses 53 – 59

قُلْ أَنْفِقُوا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا لَنْ يُتَقَبَلَ مِنْكُمْ إِنَّا كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا
فَاسِقِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ أَنْ تُقَبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ
كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالَى وَلَا
يُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا أَوْهَمَ كَرِهُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا

أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَتَزْهَقَ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ
لَمِنكُمْ وَمَا هُمْ مِنكُمْ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْزُقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَوْ يَجِدُونَ
مَلْجَأًا أَوْ مَغْرَبًا أَوْ مُدْخَلًا لَّوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَلْمِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ فَإِنْ أُعْطُوا مِنْهَا رَضُوا وَإِنْ
لَمْ يُعْطُوا مِنْهَا إِذَا هُمْ يَسْخَطُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُوا مَا
أَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ سَيُؤْتِينَا اللَّهُ مِنْ
فَضْلِهِ وَرَسُولُهُ إِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ رَاغِبُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

Say, "Spend, willingly or unwillingly, it will never be accepted from you. You have been a sinning people."

[53]

And nothing has prevented their spending(s) from being accepted from them but that they have disbelieved in Allah and in His Messenger, and they do not come to the Ṣalāh but lazily, and do not spend but unwillingly. [54]

So, their wealth and their children should not attract you. In fact, Allah wants to punish them with these in this lowly life and that their souls should depart while they are disbelievers. [55]

And they swear by Allah that they are from among you, whereas they are not from among you, but they are a people in fear. [56]

If they find a place of refuge or caves or any place to enter, they will turn towards it running unbridled. [57]

And among them there are those who find fault with you in the matter of Ṣadaqāt (alms). So, if they are given some of it, they are quite happy, and if they are given nothing from it, suddenly they become unhappy. [58]

Only if they were happy with what Allah and His Messenger had given to them, and had said, "Allah is all-sufficient for us. Allah shall give us (more) of His grace, and His Messenger as well. Indeed, we crave for Allah alone." [59]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses were bad morals and bad deeds of the hypocrites. The same subject continues in the verses quoted above. As for the statement in verse 55 -- where it has been declared that the wealth and children of hypocrites should not be taken as a blessing for them as these are, in fact, a form of punishment from Allah -- it has a reason. Is it not that love for and engrossment in worldly life becomes a punishment right here in this world? One starts with desires to acquire worldly wealth, then goes through a series of hard work to establish the necessary channels, day in and day out, sacrificing sleep, comfort and family life. After that, if one succeeds, come the concerns of increasing and retaining it -- a round the clock punishment indeed. A serious loss or sickness could become unwelcome cans of worries, and if one happens to get everything one wants, the vicious circle continues either through apprehensions of decreasing wealth or cravings of increasing it further. There is just no respite anytime.

Finally, these things go out of one's hands. This may happen at the time of death, or much earlier. Whenever it does, despair takes over. What is this, if not punishment? Man surrounds himself with articles of comfort and calls it comfort. Real comfort, the peace and comfort of the heart is something man has yet to find. But, in the meantime, man has to rely on material means and things for satisfaction, not realizing that these agents will keep snatching away his share of peace in this world and will also become the prelude to the punishment in the world to come.

Can Ṣadaqah be given to a disbeliever?

The last two verses show that the hypocrites used to receive a share from properties available as Ṣadaqāt (plural of Ṣadaqah, meaning a donation through which one seeks reward with Allah Ta'ālā, usually referred to as alms or charity). But, when they did not get these as they wished, they became angry and started accusing and cursing. If, at this place, Ṣadaqāt are taken in their general sense -- which includes all Ṣadaqāt, necessary (*wājib*) and voluntary (*nafl*) -- then, there is no problem, because non-Muslims can be given out of the voluntary Ṣadaqāt. This is permissible on the basis of the consensus of Muslim Ummah and stands proved from Sunnah. However, even if Ṣadaqāt at this place mean what is obligatory, like Zakāh and 'Ushr, then, we

should remember that the hypocrites were given a share from it on the basis that they claimed to be Muslims. Since they claimed to believe in all the necessary articles of faith and their *kufr* was hidden in their hearts, with no conclusive proof in their apparent claims they were treated as Muslims to the extent of this worldly life and Allah Ta'ālā had, in His wisdom, given the orders that the hypocrites should be treated as Muslims. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Signs of Hypocrites and Warning for Muslims

In verse 54, two signs of hypocrites have been given: (1) they come to the Ṣalāh lazily and listlessly, and (2) that they spend in the way of Allah unwillingly.

Muslims have been warned here that sloth in Ṣalāh and being sour at heart while spending in the way of Allah, that is, Zakāh and Ṣadaqah, are signs of *nifāq* (hypocrisy). All Muslims should make conscious effort to stay safe from these signs.

Verse 60

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَمِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَ الْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَرَمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۖ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

The Ṣadaqāt (prescribed alms) are only for the poor, the needy, those employed to collect these, those whose hearts are to be won, in (freeing) slaves, in (releasing) those in debt, in the way of Allah and for a wayfarer – this being prescribed by Allah. And Allah is Knowing, Wise. [60]

Commentary

Recipients of Ṣadaqāt

Objection raised by some hypocrites against the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and the answer to that, was given in verses previous to this. It will be recalled that the hypocrites had blamed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he (God forbid) does not observe justice while disbursing Ṣadaqāt and gives whatever he wishes to whomsoever he chooses.

In the present verse, by listing the recipients of Ṣadaqāt category-wise, Allah Ta'ālā has removed their misunderstanding and told them

that He has himself determined as to who should receive Ṣadaqāt. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم only complies with the Divine decree while disbursing Ṣadaqāt – doing nothing on his own or with his personal opinion.

This is also confirmed by the Ḥadīth reported in Abū Dāwūd and Dārqutnī as based on a narration by Sayyidnā Ziyād ibn Ḥārith al-Ṣudā'ī who says: I visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where I noticed that he was sending Muslim forces against my people. I said to him: 'Yā Rasūlallāh, you do not have to send any troops. I guarantee that all of them will submit before you with pleasure.' Then I wrote a letter to my people and all of them embraced Islām. Thereupon, he said: يَا أَحَاَصَدَاءَ الطَّاعِ فِي قَوْمِي (which was like a title saying that this person was the beloved one of his people who followed him!). I submitted: 'I deserve no credit for that. Allah, in His grace, guided them right and they embraced Islām.' I was still present in the sitting, says the narrator, when a person came in asking for something. The answer he gave to him was:

“Allah Ta'ālā has never handed over the distribution of Ṣadaqāt to any prophet, even to anyone other than a prophet. Instead of that, He has Himself determined eight categories for it. If you are included under one of those eight, I can let you have it. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 168, v. 8)

This was the background in which this verse was revealed. Now, before going to its explanation in full, please understand that Allah *Jalla Thanā'uh* has promised sustenance for the entire creation. Says the Qur'an: وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا (And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision – 11:6). However, in His infinite wisdom, he has not done something like making all of them equal in the matter of provision or sustenance – or *rizq* as the Qur'an says. This would have done away with the difference of rich and poor. This is a vast field of inquiry full of hundreds of wise insights into the moral grooming of human beings and into the proper ordering of the universal system they live under – something that cannot be taken up in details at this place. So, it was in His wisdom that He made someone rich and someone else poor and then fixed a share for the poor and needy in the riches of the rich. It was said: وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَعْلُومٌ لِّلَّسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ (And, in their wealth, there is a share fixed for the asking and the deprived – 70:24) which was theirs as a matter of right.

First of all, this tells us that the command to take out Ṣadaqah from the wealth of the wealthy is no favor from them. In fact, this is a right of the needy the fulfillment of which is their duty. Then, it also tells us that this right is fixed in the sight of Allah Ta‘ālā – not that someone decreases or increases it at will, anytime. Pursuant to that, the duty of making the amount of this fixed right widely known was assigned to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Therefore, he acted with marked diligence and elan in this matter. He could have informed his Companions about it orally. But, he did not consider it to be sufficient. Instead, he had detailed executive orders written and placed in the custody of Sayyidnā ‘Umar and Sayyidnā ‘Amr ibn Hazām رضى الله عنهما. This clearly proves that the *niṣāb* (threshold) of Zakāh, and the amount of Zakāh in each *niṣāb*, have been fixed by Allah Ta‘ālā and promulgated through His Messenger to remain valid forever. No one, at any time and in any country, has any right to decrease, increase, change or alter what has been prescribed.

It is correct to say that the obligation of Ṣadaqah and Zakāh was already decreed by revelation during the early stage of Islām in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr has cited the verse of Sūrah Al-Muzzammil: فَاقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ (So, establish Ṣalāh and give Zakāh – 73:20) in proof because this Sūrah is among those that belong to the initial period of revelation and, along with Ṣalāh, it carries the injunction of Zakāh. However, the narratives of Ḥadīth seem to indicate that, during the initial period of Islām, any particular *niṣāb* for Zakāh, or a particular amount, was not fixed. In its absence, whatever was left behind after having served the needs of a Muslim was spent in the way of Allah. The fixation of *niṣāb* and the declaration of the amount of Zakāh came after Hijrah in Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah. After that, the firmly established system of the receipts of Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt was something that came into existence only after the conquest of Makkah.

This verse – with the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi‘īn – describes the disbursement of the same obligatory (*wājib*) Ṣadaqah which is obligatory on Muslims like Ṣalāh, because the heads of disbursement fixed in this verse are the heads of the obligatory Ṣadaqāt. As for the voluntary (*Nafil*) Ṣadaqāt, given the clear statements of Ḥadīth narratives, their range is quite vast. To be precise, they are not

restricted to these eight heads of expenditure.

Though, in the verse appearing above, the general word: صدقات (Ṣadaqāt) has been used – which apparently may include the obligatory and the voluntary both – but, there is a consensus of the Muslim Ummah, on the point that this verse refers only to the obligatory (wājib) Ṣadaqāt. It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) whenever used in an absolute sense anywhere in the Qurʾān – while there is no textual evidence to prove that it is voluntary Ṣadaqah – it invariably means obligatory Ṣadaqah at that place.

This verse has been initiated with the word: اِنَّمَا (innamā) which is used for restriction (*haṣr* and *inhiṣār*). Thereby, the very first word in the beginning of the statement speaks for itself that the recipients of Ṣadaqāt being enumerated next are obligatory Ṣadaqāt and must, therefore, be spent on them. In fact, obligatory Ṣadaqāt cannot be spent on any good cause other than them, such as, the preparation for Jihād or making *masjids* and religious schools or other institutions of public welfare. Though, all these projects are necessary and there is great reward for investing in them, but obligatory Ṣadaqāt the quantum of which stands fixed cannot be applied to such projects.

The second word: صدقات (Ṣadaqāt) appearing in the verse is the plural form of Ṣadaqah. Lexically, it denotes a portion of the wealth or property that is spent for the sake of Allah (Qāmūs). In Mufradāt al-Qurʾān, Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has said that Ṣadaqah is called Ṣadaqah because it is derived from the root of 'Ṣidq' which means 'truth' and the one who gives something in Ṣadaqah purports that he is true in his word and deed, he has no worldly motives and is spending for the pleasure of Allah only. Therefore, a Ṣadaqah mixed up with a desire to earn a fair name or to project one's personality or any other worldly motive conceivable has been declared to be null and void by the Holy Qurʾān.

As stated earlier too, the word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) is general in terms of its real meaning. It is used for voluntary Ṣadaqah as well as for obligatory Zakāh. Its use for *nafl* (voluntary or supererogatory charity) is already very common. However, it has also been used for *fard* (obligatory or prescribed alms) at several places in the Qurʾān, for example: خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] – 9:103) and the verse: إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَتُ (The Ṣadaqāt [prescribed alms] are only for ...)

under discussion right now. In fact, according to the verification of commentator Al-Qurṭubī, when the Qur'an mentions the word: صدقة (Ṣadaqah) in an absolute sense, it invariably means the *fard* (obligatory) Ṣadaqah.

In Ḥadīth narratives, the word: صدقة (Ṣadaqah) has also been used for every good deed, for instance, says the Ḥadīth: 'Meeting a Muslim with a smile is also a Ṣadaqah.' Or, 'helping the bearer of a burden carry it is also a Ṣadaqah.' Or, 'to share the water drawn from a well for personal use with someone else is also a Ṣadaqah.' In these Ḥadīth references, the word: صدقة (Ṣadaqah) has been used in its general sense with a figurative touch.

The third word after that begins with: للفقراء (li' l-fuqarā'). It will be noted that the letter *lām* appears in the very beginning, a letter used to carry the sense of particularization. Therefore, the sentence would mean that all Ṣadaqāt rightfully belong only to those who have been mentioned later.

Now, we can go to a detailed description of the eight recipients mentioned after that:

Out of these, the first category of recipients is that of *al-fuqarā'* (the poor) followed by the second which is that of *al-masākīn* (the needy or indigent). There is, though, difference of opinion about the real meaning of '*faqīr*' and '*miskīn*.' A '*faqīr*' is one who has nothing while a '*miskīn*' is one who has less than the *niṣāb*.¹ But, they remain the same under the injunction of Zakāh. No difference exists there. The outcome is that a person who does not own wealth or property to the value of *niṣāb* in excess of his or her basic needs shall be a person to whom Zakāh can be given and for that person too this taking of Zakāh is permissible. As for 'basic needs,' included therein is everything like the residential house, utensils in use, clothes and furniture etc. Anyone who has the *niṣāb*, that is, 7 1/2 *tolas*² gold, or 52 1/2 *tolas*³ of silver, or its equivalent in cash – and is not in debt – then, it is not permissible for such a person to receive Zakāh nor is it permissible for

1. The minimum quantity or amount, or threshold of wealth or property liable to payment of obligatory Zakāh (prescribed alms or poor-due)

2. =87.48 grams.

3. = 612.36 grams.

2 & 3 as determined by Hadrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi رحمه الله عليه
in his اوزان شرعيه .

anyone to give it to him. Similarly, a person who has some silver or cash and some gold and the combined market price equals the price of 52 1/2 tolas (612.36 grams) of silver, then, this person too is deemed to have the *niṣāb*. It is not permissible for him to take Zakāh nor is it permissible for anyone to give it to him. But, a person who is not a man of *niṣāb*, however, is strong and healthy to earn his livelihood, and has enough for a day, then, giving Zakāh to him is, no doubt, permissible but what is not permissible is that he goes about asking people to help him out. Many such people ignore this restriction not realizing that stretching their hands before others is Ḥaram (unlawful). Whatever such a person acquires by soliciting has been equated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with an ember from Hell. (Abū Dāwūd, on the authority of a report from Sayyidnā 'Alī, Qurtubī)

So, the outcome is that there is no difference in a '*faqīr*' and a '*miskīn*' as far as Zakāh is concerned. But, it does make a difference in the injunction of Waṣiyyah (will). If a will is made for the '*masākīn*,' what kind of people will be eligible to receive the bequeathed amount? And if the will is made for '*fuqarā*' what kind of people will be its recipients? There is no need to describe its details at this place. In brief, the common thing between the two categories – the '*faqīr*' and the '*miskīn*' – is that whoever of the two receives from the property of Zakāh should be a Muslim and should not be the owner of property which is more than his basic needs, or the standard of *niṣāb*.

Common Ṣadaqāt can, however, be given to non-Muslims as well. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: تَصَدَّقُوا عَلَى أَهْلِ الْأَذْيَانِ كُلِّهَا (Give Ṣadaqah to people of all religions). But, about the Ṣadaqah of Zakāh, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, while sending Sayyidnā Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه to Yaman, had instructed him that Zakāh should be taken from the rich among Muslims and be spent over their poor. Therefore, Zakāh can be spent only among Muslim *fuqarā* (the poor) and *masākīn* (the needy). However, with the exception of Zakāh, it is permissible to give other Ṣadaqāt – even the *Ṣadaqātu 'l-Fiṭr* – to a non-Muslim '*faqīr*.' (Hidāyah)

Incidentally, the second condition that a person should not be the owner of *niṣāb* mentioned a little earlier becomes self-evident from the very meaning of a '*faqīr*' and a '*miskīn*' – because, either he would have nothing or, at the least, would have less than the fixed amount of *niṣ*-

āb holdings. Therefore, a '*faqīr*' and a '*miskīn*' are common in the sense that they both do not possess property matching the standard value of *niṣāb*. After having mentioned these two categories of recipients, the text describes six more. Out of these, the the first (which is the third in the aggregate list) is that of the collectors of Ṣadaqah which has been described in the text as: *الْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا* (and those employed to collect them). This refers to those who are appointed by the Islāmic government to collect the Ṣadaqāt of Zakāh and 'Ushr etc. from the people and deposit it in the Baytulmāl (the state treasury). Since these appointees spend all their time in carrying out this service, therefore, taking care of their needs is a responsibility that falls on the Islāmic government. This verse of the Qur'ān has, by allotting a share to them in the disbursement of Zakāh, has categorically determined that the payment for the services rendered by them shall be made from the head of Zakāh.

Actually, Allah Ta'ālā has entrusted the duty of taking Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt from Muslims directly with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, as said in the verse: *خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً* (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] – 9:103) which appears later on in this very Sūrah. Detailed comments about it will be taken up there. However, it is sufficient to mention here that, in the light of this verse, the duty of taking Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt has been placed on the shoulders of the Amīr of Muslims. It is obvious that the Amīr cannot carry out this duty all by himself throughout the country without functional executives and assistants. It is these executives and assistants who have been mentioned in the words: *وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا* (and those employed to collect them).

It was to implement the command given in these verses that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had sent many Companions as functional executives responsible for collecting Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt to many regions of the Islāmic state. The payment he had made for the services rendered by them was, as instructed in the verse, from the very amount collected as Zakāh. Included among such people were Ṣaḥābah who were rich. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: *ṣadaqah* is not *ḥalāl* for anyone rich (*al-ghaniyy*: owner of *māl*, that is, wealth and property) except five persons: (1) One who has set out for Jihād where he does not have necessary financial support with him – though, he may be rich back home. (2) The 'Āmil of Ṣadaqah (the collec-

tor) employed to carry out this duty. (3) One who, though, owns wealth and property, but is in debt for more than the worth of what he has. (4) One who buys Ṣadaqah property from a '*miskīn*' (needy person) against cash. (5) One who has been given a gift of property acquired as Ṣadaqah by some poor person ('*faqīr*').

As for the problem of determining the proportion of the amount of money to be paid to those employed to collect Ṣadaqāt, the answer lies in the rule that it will be paid in accordance with the status of their working hours and performance. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Ahkam al-Qur'ān and Qurtubī)

Of course, it will be necessary that the salaries of the employees do not go higher than a half of the total Zakāh. If the collection of Zakāh is low, so low that, after the disbursement of salaries to employees, not even that half remains available, then, salaries would have to be reduced. More than half shall not be spent. (Tafsīr Mazhari, Zahirīyah)

What has been said above shows that the amount of money given to those employed to collect Ṣadaqah from the head of Zakāh is not given to them as Ṣadaqah, instead of which, it is a payment in return for their service. Therefore, they deserve to get this amount despite being rich – and it is permissible to give this amount to them from the Zakāh funds. Out of the eight heads of Zakāh disbursement, this is the only head in which the amount of Zakāh is given as payment in return for services rendered. Otherwise, Zakāh is the very name of the gift given to the poor without being a return for any services – and if a poor person was given something from Zakāh funds against some service rendered, Zakāh remained unpaid.

For this reason, two questions arise here – firstly, how was Zakāh property given in return for services rendered, and secondly, how could this Zakāh property become *ḥalāl* (lawful) for the rich person? Both these questions have the same answer – that we should understand the real status of those employed to collect Ṣadaqah. The status of these employees is that of the authorized representatives of *al-fuqarā'*, the poor ones, and everyone knows that the taking of possession by an authorized representative is regarded to be as good as the possession taken by the principal himself. If a person makes someone his representative authorized to recover his debt and the other person in debt hands over the amount of debt to this authorized representative, then, soon after the possession taken by the representative, the li-

ability of the debtor stands discharged. So, when the amount of Zakāh has been recovered by those employed to collect it in their capacity as the authorized representatives of the poor, i.e. the *fuqarā'*, then, the amount of Zakāh received from people stands duly paid. Now, this whole amount lies under the ownership of the *fuqarā'* on whose behalf the '*āmilīn*' have received it in the capacity of their authorized representative. Hence, the amount given to them in return for their services is in fact given to them by the '*fuqarā'*' as a compensation of services they have rendered for them, because once *zakāh* is received by a *faqīr* or his agent, he may give it to anyone against his services.

Now remains the question: The *fuqarā'* never made these people their authorized representatives. How, then, did they become their agents in fact? The answer is that the head of a Muslim State (the '*Amīr*') has been appointed by Allah Ta'ālā as a representative of all the poor to collect and disburse *zakāh* on their behalf. The logical consequence of this arrangement is that the persons appointed by an '*Amīr*', being his deputies, are also taken to be the representatives of the poor.

To sum up, that which was given to those employed to collect *Ṣadaqāt* (prescribed alms) was really no Zakāh as such. Instead of that, it was given to them as compensation in return for the service rendered by them on behalf of the poor recipients of Zakāh. It is like a poor person making someone an attorney for his case and paying for his services from what he has received from Zakāh funds. In this situation, the payment of attorney's fee cannot be termed as the payment of Zakāh.

Special Note

Details given above also tell us that those who collect *Ṣadaqāt* and Zakāh for Islāmic religious schools and organizations (without being appointed by an Islamic state for that purpose) are not included in '*āmilīn*' (collectors of *zakāh*) as contemplated in the Holy Qur'an.

The reason is that neither the individual poor persons have authorized them to receive *zakāh* on their behalf, nor the head of an Islamic state has appointed them as such. Their correct position is that the *zakāh* - payers have made them their agent to disburse *zakāh* among the deserving people. Therefore, they can neither draw their salaries from *zakāh*, nor can the obligation of a *zakāh*-payer be discharged by their possession, unless they pay it to a person entitled to receive *zakāh*.

Generally, serious negligence is shown in this matter. Many institutions collect Zakāh funds and keep it for years. Zakāh payers think that their Zakāh stands paid – although, their Zakāh will stand paid only when the amount given by them has been disbursed in favor of its recipients.

Similarly, there are many others who would unknowingly take such people to be included under the Qur'ānic injunction about the collectors of Ṣadaqah and go on to pay their salaries from the funds of Zakāh itself. This is non-permissible, for the givers and the takers both.

Another Question: Payment for 'Ibādah

Another question should be clarified here. It is inferred from some Qur'ānic indicators and narrations of Ḥadīth that taking wages and compensation on 'Ibādah is *ḥarām* (unlawful, forbidden). The Musnad of Aḥmad reports a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Shibl رضى الله عنه according to which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: **إِقْرَأُوا الْقُرْآنَ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا بِهِ** (Recite the Qur'ān but do not eat by means of it). In some other reports, the compensation taken on the Qur'ān has been called a piece of Hell. It is on this basis that many jurists of Muslim Ummah have held that the taking of wages or compensation for any act of 'Ibādah (worship) is not permissible. Then, it is also evident that the function of collecting prescribed alms is a religious mission and an act of 'ibādah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has called it a kind of Jihād. According to this principle it should not have been lawful to receive any remuneration for collecting *zakāh*. But, this verse of the Holy Qur'ān has clearly declared it to be permissible and has included it as one of the eight heads under which Zakāh can be disbursed.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has taken up this question in his Commentary. He has said that taking compensation for 'Ibādāt (acts of worship) that are obligatory (*farḍ*) or compulsory individually (*wājib al-'ain*) is absolutely *ḥarām* (unlawful). But, taking any compensation for duties called *farḍ al-kifāyah* is permissible in accordance with this very verse. Farḍ al-Kifāyah means that a duty has been imposed on the entire Muslim community or on a whole city as a collective obligation. But, it is not the duty of every individual to do it. If some of the people there fulfill the duty, the rest stand absolved. Yes – if no one does it – everyone becomes a sinner.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has also said that this very verse proves that

taking a compensation for leading congregational prayers (*Imāmah*) and delivering sermons (*Khiṭābah*) is also permissible – because, they too are *wājib al-Kifāyah* (compulsory in the degree of sufficiency) and not *wājib-al-‘ain* (compulsory individually). Similarly, the areas of teaching Qur’ān, Ḥadīth and other religious sciences are no different. These are duties that must be carried out. The entire Muslim Ummah is responsible for it. This is *Fard al-Kifāyah* on the community. If some people fulfill this obligation, others stand absolved. Therefore, if some compensation or salary is taken for it, that too will be permissible.

The fourth among the eight categories of recipients of *Zakāh* is that of ‘people whose hearts are to be won.’ The Qur’ān calls them: *مؤلفه القلوب*

These were people who were given *Ṣadaqāt* so that their attitude towards Islām could be mollified. The general impression about this category is that it included both Muslims and non-Muslims. The object was to persuade non-Muslims in favor of Islām and neo-Muslims to become more firm. Those who were already staunch Muslims were helped to guide their people right through such measures. Then, there were people among non-Muslims whose evil had to be avoided through a policy of appeasement. And there were people who would listen to no sermon or sword. The only language they understood was the language of favor and generosity. They too came closer to reconciliation through this policy. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did whatever was legally possible to bring people from the darkness of disbelief into the light of faith. However, after the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Islām had become politically strong and the initial plans to avoid the threat of disbelievers or to provide support to neo-Muslims did not remain valid anymore. What was expedient then had lost its expediency. So, that share also came to an end. Some Muslim jurists have taken the position that it has been ‘abrogated.’ This position is attributed to Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū Ḥanīfah and Malīk ibn Anas, may the mercy of Allah be upon them.

However, many others hold that the share of this category has not been abrogated. That it was allowed to lapse during the period of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رضى الله عنهم means that it was allowed to lapse because there was no need for it. However, if such a need does come up at some later time, it could be given again. This is the juristic view of Imām Zuhri, Qādī ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, ibn al-‘Arabī, Imāms Shāfi‘ī

and Aḥmad. But, the most authentic position is that non-Muslims were never given a share from Ṣadaqāt at any time whatsoever, nor are they included under the category of *mu'allafah al-quloob* as contemplated in the present verse 60.

In his Tafsīr, Imām al-Qurṭubī has given a detailed list of people to whom the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had given a share from the head of Ṣadaqāt. The purpose was to win their hearts through persuasion. At the end of his list, Al-Qurṭubī has this to say: *وَبِالْجَمْعَةِ فَكَلَّمَهُمْ مُؤْمِنٌ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِمْ* It means: 'To sum it up, it can be said that all recipients under this category were Muslims and there was no *kāfir* included therein.'

Similarly, it appears in Tafsīr Maḥzarī: *لَمْ يُبَيَّنْ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَعْطَى أَحَدًا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ لِلْإِثْلَابِ شَيْئًا مِنَ الزَّكَاةِ* It means: 'There is no report to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has ever given a share to a *kāfir* (disbeliever) from Zakāh property in order to persuade him favorably.' This is supported by what is said in Tafsīr al-Kashshāf: 'The details of the recipients of Ṣadaqāt have been given here to refute the allegations of disbelievers and hypocrites who used to raise objections against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he did not give them their share from the Ṣadaqāt. The purpose of giving these details in this verse is to tell them that disbelievers had no right in Ṣadaqah properties. If the disbelievers were also included under the category of *mu'allafah al-quloob*, there was no need for this answer in refutation.

Tafsīr Maḥzarī has also clarified the error into which some people have fallen because of some Ḥadīth narratives which seem to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has given gifts to some non-Muslims. For example, there is a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and Tirmidhī which says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave some gifts to Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah when he was a *kāfir*. About it, quoting Imām al-Nawawī, the author of the Tafsīr says that these gifts were not from Zakāh. Rather, they were given from the *khums* (one-fifth) of the spoils of the battle of Ḥunain deposited in the Baitu'l-Māl – and it is obvious that spending from this head of the Baitu'l-Māl both on Muslims or non-Muslims is permissible under the consensus of Muslim jurists. Then, he says: Imām al-Baihaqī, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, Imām Ibn Kathīr and others have concurred that this gift was not given from Zakāh, but was given from the one-fifth of spoils.

A useful supplementary note

From here we also come to know that wealth and property belonging to Ṣadaqāt were, though, deposited in the Baitu'l-Māl during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself, but they were kept under a totally separate account. Similarly, other heads of the Baitu'l-Māl, such as, the *Khums* of *Ghanīmah* (one-fifth of spoils) or the *Khums* of *Ma'ādin* (one-fifth of mines and quarries) etc., had their own separate accounts and modes of disbursement. Muslim jurists have given details in this connection. According to them there should be four heads of accounts in the Baitu'l-Māl separate from each other. The main instruction given is that keeping the accounts separate is not enough, instead of that, each head should have a separate Baitu'l-Māl so that each one of them exercises full control when spending it on approved recipients and categories. Of course, if a particular head faces shortage of funds, these can be borrowed from another head of accounts and spent as necessary. These heads of the Baitu'l-Māl are as follows:

1. Khums al-Ghanāim: The One-Fifth of Spoils: This is property acquired from disbelievers as an outcome of war. Out of its five shares, four are distributed among Mujāhidīn while the fifth share is the right of the Baitu'l-Māl. Then, there is the one-fifth of mines (*Khums al-Ma'ādin*). A one-fifth of whatever is mined from different kinds of quarries is the right of the Baitu'l-Māl. Then, there is the one-fifth of buried treasures. This is known as the *Khums* of *Rikāz*. It refers to any old treasure dug out of the ground. A one-fifth of this too is the right of the Baitu'l-Māl. All these three kinds of *Khums* (one-fifth) are included in one single head of the Baitu'l-Māl.

2. Ṣadaqāt: This includes *Zakāh*, *Ṣadaqātu 'l-Fiṭr*, and 'Ushr of their lands paid by Muslims.

3. Kharāj and Fai' Property which includes tax collected from lands owned by non-Muslims, *Jizyah* paid by them, taxes on commercial enterprises run by them (*al-kharāj*) and it included all properties acquired from non-Muslims with their consent and agreement (*al-fai'*).

4. Ḍawā'i' (Lost properties) which included what lost or remained unclaimed as well as property left by a person having no heir.

Though, expenditures under these four heads are separate, but the right of the poor and the needy has been set aside in all four of these heads. This shows the particular care taken to empower the weaker section of the society – a certain hallmark of the Muslim state indeed. Otherwise, elite classes keep getting the opportunities to grow among usual social systems of the world at the expense of the poor ones. The poor never see their day. What came up as a reaction of this situation in the form of socialism and communism was far from being natural. In fact, it was like running from the rain and resting under the drain pipe, not to say much about its harmful effects for human morals.

To sum up, an Islāmic government has four Baitu'l-Māls for four different heads with the right of the poor and needy secured in all four. The expenditures of the first three among these have been fixed and explained clearly by the Holy Qur'ān as follows. The description of the expenditures of the first head, that is, of the one-fifth of spoils (Khums al-Ghanāim) appears at the beginning of the tenth part in Sūrah Al-Anfāl (verse 41). The description of the expenditures of the second head, that is, of Ṣadaqāt has been taken up in verse 60 of Sūrah Al-Taubah that is under study right now. The third head, technically known as the property of *al-fai'*, finds a detailed mention in Sūrah Al-Ḥashr. Many expenditures of the Islāmic government, such as, those on the military, and on the salaries of civil servants, are disbursed from this head. The fourth head of al-Ḍawā'i' covered lost or unclaimed property or property having no inheritor. It was set aside for the disabled, the handicapped, destitute men and women and abandoned children, following the practice and teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to which the rightly guided Caliphs of Islām, faithfully adhered. (Shāmī, Kitābu'z-Zakāh)

Incidentally, the saying of Muslim jurists, that the four heads of the Baitu'l-Māl should be kept separate and that the expenditures therein should be incurred as approved, has its proof in the Qur'ān, the practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the adherence of the rightly guided Caliphs to that practice.

After this supplementary note, we can now revert to the original issue of *mu'allafah al-quloob*. It is already established that no *zakāh* was paid to a non-Muslim under this category. Therefore, they stand excluded from the recipients of *zakāh*. Now, left there are the new Mus-

lims who can fall under this head. All the Muslim jurists are unanimous on the point that the poor new Muslims are eligible to get their share under this category. However, there is a difference of opinion about the rich ones. Imām Shāfi'ī and Imām Aḥmad are of the view that all the Muslim converts who need a sympathetic attitude to make them firm on Islamic beliefs can receive *zakāh* under the category of '*mu'allafah-al-quloob*' even though they are not poor in the sense that they own the *niṣāb*. The basic principle according to them is that poverty is not a condition for the eligibility for *zakāh* under each head from the eight categories mentioned in the verse. On the contrary, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Mālik are of the view that Muslim '*mu'allafah-al-quloob*' can be given *zakāh* only if they are poor and do not own the *niṣāb*. If they own the *niṣāb*, they cannot receive *zakāh* even under this category. Both these Imams hold that poverty is the basic condition for all the eight categories mentioned in the verse, with the sole exception of '*āmilīn*' as explained earlier. The debtors, the wayfarers and the slaves as well can receive *zakāh* only if they are poor in their given state of affairs, even though may have wealth otherwise.

This explanation shows that despite their difference of opinion in this particular aspect, all of them agree on the point that '*mu'allafah al-qulūb*' as a category of the recipients of *zakāh* still holds good and has never been repealed or abrogated.

Up to this point, four out of the eight recipients of Ṣadaqāt have been identified. The right of these four has been introduced with the addition of the letter *lām* as in: *لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ* (*li'l-fuqarā' wa'l-masākīn*: for the poor and for the needy). The form has been changed while mentioning the next four recipients where the initial letter *lām* has been replaced with the letter *fī* as in: *وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِينَ* (and in [freeing] slaves and in [releasing] those in debt). Al-Zamakhsharī has given a reason for this nuance of language in his Tafsīr al-Kashshāf. According to him, this is a device employed to indicate that the last four recipients are more deserving as compared to the first four, because the letter *fī* is used to denote attending circumstances or conditions which yields the meaning that Ṣadaqāt should be placed 'in' or within these people. Then, the reason for their being more deserving is their being more in need – because, a slave owned by someone suffers more as compared to

poor people in general. Similarly, a person in debt hounded by his lenders is in deeper trouble as compared to common poor and needy for he has the additional worry as to how he is going to pay off his debt which is certainly more disturbing than the rest of his usual needs.

Out of the remaining four categories of recipients, the first one mentioned here is that of *وَفِي الرِّقَابِ* (*wa fi 'r-riqāb*: and in [freeing] slaves). *Riqāb* is the plural form of *raqabah*. Actually, it means the neck. But, in recognized usage, it is also used to allude to a person whose neck is shackled in the chains of slavery.

What is the meaning of *ar-riqāb* in this verse? Interpretations of jurists differ. The majority of jurists and Ḥadīth experts agree that it refers to slaves who enter into a deal with their masters that they would earn the amount specified by them, give it to them as they earn, and once the agreed amount is paid off, they shall be free. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, such a slave is known as *mukātab*. The master of such a slave allows him to earn through business or employment and give the income to the master. In the present verse, *fi 'r-riqāb* means that this person should be helped to secure his freedom from his master who should be given a share from Zakāh funds to write off the amount due against the slave.

There is a consensus of commentators and jurists that this kind of slaves is the intended sense of the expression: *وَفِي الرِّقَابِ* (*wa fi 'r-riqāb*: and in [freeing] slaves) which requires that they should be helped to become free by paying the amount due from Zakāh funds. In cases other than this, such as, buying other slaves and setting them free, or entering into a deal with their masters that they would set them free against an agreed amount of Zakāh, there is a difference of opinion among major Muslim jurists. The majority of the Imāms of Islāmic jurisprudence – Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad ibn Hanbal and others, may the mercy of Allah be on all of them – do not take this to be permissible. Imām Mālik agrees with the majority in one version (*riwayah*) only when he declares the sense of *fi 'r-riqāb* as restricted to *mukātab* slaves (on freedom-against-money deal with master). In another version (*riwāyah*), it has also been reported from Imām Mālik that he included common slaves under the definition of *fi 'r-riqāb* as well as gave the permission to buy slaves from Zakāh amounts and free them. (Aḥkam al-Qur'ān ibn al-'Arabī al-Mālikī)

The majority of Imāms and jurists, who do not consider it permissible, have a juristic difficulty in doing so. If a slave was bought from Zakāh funds, and freed, the problem is that the very definition of Ṣadaqah does not fit right in his case – because, Ṣadaqah is a property given to someone deserving without getting something in return. Now, should the amount of Zakāh be given to the master, then, it is obvious that he is neither deserving of Zakāh, nor the amount of money being given to him is without an expected return. As for the slave, who is deserving of Zakāh, the amount was never given to him personally. This is another matter that the benefit of the amount paid to the master somehow reached the slave in that he was bought and freed. But, freeing does not get to be included under the definition of Ṣadaqah – and why would someone surrender the real meaning without any reason and go by the figurative or general sense of Ṣadaqah unnecessarily? This has no justification. Then, it is also obvious that, in the subject verse, what is being described is nothing but the categories of the recipients of Zakāh. Therefore, anything to which the definition of Ṣadaqah does not fit simply cannot be meant by *fi 'r-riqāb*. And if, this amount was to be given to the slave himself, then, the slave does not have the right to own. The result will be that it will automatically become the property of the master. Then, the matter of releasing or not releasing the slave will also continue to be in the control of his master.

It is because of this juristic difficulty that the majority of Imāms and jurists hold the view that the Qur'anic expression: *فِي الرِّقَابِ* (*fi 'r-riqāb*) refers to *mukātab* slaves only. This also tells us about the standard rule of conduct in this matter. To give Ṣadaqah properly, the condition is that its giver makes a deserving person its owner and sees to it that the amount has passed into his possession – because, until the deserving person has taken the amount in his possession, as its owner, Zakāh remains unpaid.

The sixth category of recipients: *الْغَارِمِينَ* (*al-ghārimīn*: and in [releasing] those in debt) is the plural of *ghārim* which means a person in debt. It has been mentioned earlier that the fifth and sixth categories of recipients introduced with the letter *fī* are ahead of the first four recipients in their claim of preference. Therefore, giving out to free a slave or to release a person from debt is more merit worthy than giving to the poor and the needy in general. However, the condition is

that the person in debt does not have enough funds to pay off that debt – because, lexically, the word: *ghārim* is applied only to such a person in debt. And some Imāms also add a condition that this person should not have borrowed for something impermissible. If someone goes in debt for something sinful, such as, to pay for liquor and its likes, or spends on impermissible customs of marriages and deaths, then, such a client will not be helped from the head of Zakāh so that he is not encouraged in his sin and extravagance.

The seventh category of disbursement appears in the words: *فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* (*fī sabīlillāh*: in the way of Allah). It will be noted that the letter *fī* has been repeated here once again. According to Tafsīr al-Kashshāf, the purpose of this repetition is to indicate that this area of expenditure is more merit worthy as compared to those mentioned earlier. It has two benefits. The first is helping a poor person. The second is assisting in a religious cause. The reason is that *fī sabīlillāh* either denotes a *mujāhid* who does not have the means to buy necessary weapons and war supplies, or it means the person who must fulfill the obligation of Hajj but who does not have the necessary financial support to complete his due duty. These two duties are purely religious. They are acts of worship. Therefore, by spending Zakāh funds on them one helps a poor person and supports someone do his 'Ibādah. On the same analogy, Muslim jurists have included students of the schools of Islāmic learning under this category as they too take it to fulfill what is an act of 'Ibādah in the way of Allah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to Zahrīriyyah)

The author of Bada'i' has said that one who wishes to undertake an act of sincere 'Ibādah and needs financial support to do it will be taken as included in the category of *fī sabīlillāh* – subject to the condition that he does not have enough funds to carry it out. The work of teaching and transmitting religion along with the establishment of allied institutions of promotion and publication are some examples. If someone deserving Zakāh elects to take up this work, he may be helped out with Zakāh funds, but this help cannot be extended to a rich man who owns the *niṣāb*.

Details appearing above show that all explanations of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the way of Allah) under different circumstances carry the condition of poverty and need alongside. The rich man who owns the *niṣāb* does

not have a share in this head too – except that his present holdings may be insufficient for the needs of Jihād or Ḥajj he is going to undertake. Call him rich because he has property above the *niṣāb*. In fact, such a person has been called rich in Ḥadīth. But, in the final analysis, he too turns out to be a poor and needy person in terms of the amount of funds he needs for Jihād or Ḥajj – and this he does not have with him! Shaykh ibn Humām has said in *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*: The words used to describe recipients mentioned in the verse of Ṣadaqāt prove that they deserve what they do on the basis of poverty and need. The words for the poor and the needy are obvious by themselves. Other words used for freeing of slaves, releasing from debt, in the way of Allah and for the wayfarer also suggest that they receive shares to alleviate their needs. However, those employed to collect Ṣadaqāt receive their share in return for the services rendered by them. Therefore, in that, the rich and the poor are equal. This is similar to what has been briefly mentioned earlier under the category of ‘those in debt.’ A person owes a debt of Rupees ten thousand.¹ He has Rupees five thousand with him. He can be given Zakāh up to Rs. Five thousand, because the funds he has with him will be taken as not with him due to the debt.

A word of Caution

The literal meaning of *fī sabīlillāh* is very general and very common. Anything done for the good pleasure of Allah is included under *fī sabīlillāh* in the light of this popular sense. Unfortunately, there are people who wish to understand the Qur’ān through a literal translation alone. They would skip the explanations and statements of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and ignore the sayings of major commentators. As a result, they fall into error. One such error shows up when they look at *fī sabīlillāh* and find it spacious enough to accommodate everything they fancy. Under this head of Zakāh, they have included everything that is considered to be good or religious. Under this umbrella, they have included the building of mosques, religious schools, hospitals, inns, even the provision of public services like wells, bridges and roads. Then, they do not seem to forget the salaries and contingent expenses of the institutions of public service. All these, they include under *fī sabīlillāh* and declare them to be worth receiving Zakāh funds. This is absolutely wrong and very much against the consensus

1. Approximately a little less than \$200.

of the Muslim Ummah. This is something already decided clearly and categorically. There are statements of the noble Ṣaḥābah, the direct disciples of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They had learnt and understood the Qur'ān from him. Then, there are explanations of this expression passed on to us from the most learned authorities from among the Ṭabī'īn. All of them restrict the expression to Ḥujjāj and Mujāhidīn.

It appears in a Ḥadīth that someone had given a camel as religious endowment in the way of Allah (*fī sabīlillāh*). For it, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Use this camel to carry Ḥujjāj (Hajj pilgrims) on their journey.' (Al-Mabsūt, Al-Sarakhsī, p. 10, v. 3)

Imāms Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr are known exegetes who limit themselves to explaining the Qur'ān through Ḥadīth reports only. They both have particularized *fī sabīlillāh* with *mujāhidīn* and *hujjāj* who do not have the wherewithal necessary for Jihād or Ḥajj. As for jurists who have included students in religion or servants of good causes in this category, they have done so subject to the condition that they should be poor and needy. And it is obvious that the poor and the needy are in themselves the first among the recipients of Zakāh. Even if they were not included under the sense of *fī sabīlillāh*, still they would have deserved receiving Zakāh. But, no one from among the four Imāms and jurists of Muslim Ummah ever said that expenditures on institutions of public welfare, building of mosques and religious schools and the rest of their functional needs are included under the head of Zakāh disbursements. In fact, they have made it very clear that spending Zakāh funds for this purpose is impermissible. Jurists from different schools of Islāmic jurisprudence have written about it in great details. The names of some of them are being given as follows: Ḥanafī jurist Al-Sarakhsī in al-Mabsūt [p. 202, v. 2] and Sharḥ al-Siyar [p. 244, v. 4], Shāfi'ī jurist Abū 'Ubayd in Kitāb al-Amwāl, Mālikī jurist Dardīr in Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl [p. 161, v. 1] and Al-muwaffaq in al-Mughnī.

Other than the clarifications from authorities of Tafsīr and jurists of Islām referred to earlier, a little thought over this matter will help us understand the problem quickly. Let us think for a moment. If this field of Zakāh was so all-embracing that it could accommodate spending on every act of worship and virtue, then, the identification of these

eight recipients in the Qur'ān becomes (God forbid) totally redundant. So does the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم cited earlier where he said that Allah Ta'ālā has not delegated the authority to determine the recipients of Ṣadaqāt even to a prophet, in fact, He has Himself determined the eight categories of its recipients. This tells us that the element of universal application visible to an unaware person from a literal translation of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the way of Allah) is not what Allah means. Instead, it means what stands proved from the words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the related clarifications of the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭabī'īn.

The eighth category of Zakāh disbursement is: ابن السبيل (*ibn al-sabīl*: wayfarer). Sabīl means way and the word: ابن (*ibn*) is used essentially for a son. But, in Arab usage, the words: ابن (*ibn*: son), أب (*ab*: father) and أخ (*akh*: brother) etc. are also used for things which are deeply related with someone. It is according to this usage that a wayfarer is referred to as '*ibn al-sabīl*' – for the simple reason that a wayfarer is deeply related to traversing distances and reaching destinations. As a technical term of Zakāh categories, it means a traveler who does not have necessary funds with him, even if he may be a rich person in his home country. Zakāh may be given to such a traveler so that he can satisfy his needs en route and return home in peace.

At this point, the discussion about the eight categories of recipients of Ṣadaqāt and Zakāh mentioned in verse 60 has reached its completion. Now, follow some other religious issues which relate to all these categories equally.

The issue of *Tamlīk* (Transfer of Ownership)

The majority of Muslim jurists agrees that, even in the fixed eight categories of recipients, the condition for a valid payment of Zakāh is that someone deserving should be given possession of Zakāh property as its owner. If money was spent for the benefit of these very people – without having made them possess it as its owner – Zakāh will remain unpaid. This is the reason why the four Imāms and the majority of Muslim jurists agree that it is not permissible to spend Zakāh funds either on the construction of mosques, religious schools, hospitals and orphanages, or on other functional needs related to them. There is no doubt that the benefit of such projects does reach the poor, and all others who qualify as Zakāh recipients, but the fact that these things

have not passed on into their possession as owners makes Zakāh invalid.

However, in orphanages where meals and clothes are given to orphans as being owned by them, then, it is possible to spend Zakāh funds to the extent of this specific expenditure. Similarly, the cost of the medicine supplied to the poor in need, by making them its owner, could be charged to the Zakāh fund. Likewise, Muslim jurists say that the coffin of an heirless dead body cannot be provided from Zakāh funds, because the deceased is not capable of becoming an owner. Yes, it is possible that the amount of Zakāh is given to someone poor and deserving – and he, out of his free will, spends this amount on the coffin of the heirless deceased. In the same manner, if this deceased person is in debt, this debt cannot be paid off from Zakāh funds directly. Yes, if the deceased person's inheritors are poor and deserve Zakāh, then the amount can be given to them with the right to possess and own it. Once they become the 'owner' of this amount, they can – out of their choice and free will – vacate the debt of the deceased from this amount. Correspondingly, as pointed out earlier, the construction of public works does bring benefits for those who deserve Zakāh, but because they have no right of ownership established into the arrangement, Zakāh remains invalid.

As we have said before, all four Muṭjahid Imāms – Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Mālik and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal – as well as the majority of Muslim jurists agree with these rulings. Further clarifications appear in easily available writings of jurists from the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

Also added here are a few points not mentioned during the earlier discussion.

The Shāfi'ī jurist, Imām Abū 'Ubayd has said in Kitābu 'l-Amwāl that it was not permissible to spend Zakāh funds to pay off the debt owed by a deceased person, or in paying the cost of his funeral, or to build *masājid*, or to dig canals for public use. Imām Sufyān al-Thawrī and other Imāms concur with the ruling that spending on these undertakings leaves Zakāh unpaid – because, these are not one of those eight heads of expenditure mentioned in the Qur'an.

Similarly, the Ḥanbalī jurist, Al-muwaffaq has said in al-Mughnī

that spending Zakāh funds on any undertaking of public service – other than the areas of spending mentioned in the Qur'an – is not permissible. Building mosques, bridges, and drinking water facilities or repairing public roads, supplying coffins for the deceased, feeding guests and other undertakings of this nature are apparent examples. No doubt, they are reward worthy deeds, but are not included under the specified expenditures of Ṣadaqāt (*zakāh*).

The well-recognized author of *Badā'i'*, while discussing the condition of '*tamlīk*' (the act of transferring the possession and ownership to the recipient) as basic to making the payment of Zakāh proper and valid, has also provided textual proof for it. In the Qur'an, he points out, Zakāh and obligatory Ṣadaqāt have been generally mentioned with the word: *إِيتَاءُ* (*'itā'* meaning giving in the sense of granting, offering). Listed here are some examples of the use of this word: *أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا* (Establish Ṣalāh and give Zakāh – 2:277; 9:5,11; 22:41); *أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا* (Establish Ṣalāh and give Zakāh – 2:43,83,110; 4:77; 22:78; 24:56; 73:20); *إِقَامِ الصَّلَاةَ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةَ* (establishment of Ṣalāh and giving of Zakāh – 21:73; 24:37) and *أَتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ* (give its due [Zakāh] on the day of its harvest – 6:141). So, lexically this word is used in the sense of giving as gift. Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says in *Mufradāt al-Qur'an* *الْإِيتَاءُ الْإِعْطَاءُ وَخَصَّ وَضَعَ* (The word *al-'itā'* [giving] means giving as gift; presenting and the giving of the obligatory Ṣadaqah has been particularly associated with this word in the Qur'an). Thus, the real sense of presenting something to someone as gift could be no other but that the recipient has been made its owner.

Firstly, the use of the word *al-'itā'* in that sense is not restricted to Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt only. It has actually been used in the Qur'an in the very sense of making someone an owner of what is given, for instance: *آتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَتِهِنَّ* (give women their dowers – 4:4). It is obvious that the payment of dower is recognized as valid only when the husband has passed on the amount of dower into the possession and ownership of his wife.

Secondly, Zakāh has been expressed by the alternate word: Ṣadaqah in the Holy Qur'an: *إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ* (The Ṣadaqāt [prescribed alms] are only for the poor - 60). This is a subtle explanation because Ṣadaqah, in the real sense, means to let a poor person possess, own (and spend it at will).

It should be borne in mind that feeding someone out of mercy or spending in public welfare projects is not called Ṣadaqah in the real sense. Shaykh ibn al-Humām says in Fath al-Qadīr: ‘Making a poor person the owner of what is being given is Ṣadaqah in the real sense.’ Similarly, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in Ahkām al-Qur’ān: ‘The word: صدقه (Ṣadaqah) is another name for Tamlik (transfer of ownership).’ (Jaṣṣāṣ, p. 152, v. 2)

Some Important points about the Proper Payment of Zakāh

One point arises out of a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet ﷺ had given instructions about the collection of Ṣadaqāt to Sayyidnā Mu‘adh ibn Jabal by saying: **خُذْهَا مِنْ أَغْنِيَانِهِمْ وَرُدَّهَا إِلَى فُقَرَائِهِمْ**: ‘Take it (Ṣadaqāt) from the rich among them (Muslims) and disburse it back to the poor among them.’ Based on this, Muslim jurists have said that the Zakāh of a city or township should not be sent to another city or township without the need to do so. Instead of that, poor people living in the same city or township are more deserving of it. Of course, if the near relatives of a person are poor, and live in another city, then, he can send his Zakāh to them – because, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has given the glad tidings of a two-fold reward in that situation.

Likewise, if the state of poverty and hunger prevailing in another township appears to be more acute than the condition in one’s own city of residence, then, it can be sent there as well – because, the purpose of giving Ṣadaqāt is to remove the need of poor people. This was the reason why Sayyidnā Mu‘adh used to accept clothes as part of the Ṣadaqāt paid in Yaman so that he could send these for the poor emigrants of Madīnah. (al-Qurtubī with reference to Dāruqtūnī)

If a person lives in a certain city while his property is located in another, then, the city where he lives in person shall be taken into consideration, because this is the person addressed for the payment of Zakāh. (Qurtubī)

Rulings:

1. For payment of Zakāh due against a certain property, it is also permissible to take out the fortieth part of that particular property and give it to those deserving – such as, cloth, crockery, furniture and things like that stocked for commercial sales. Similarly, one can also determine the amount of Zakāh by calculating the total value of the property and distribute it over those deserving. Doing that stands

proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Āḥādīth. (Qurtubī) And some leading jurists recommend that, in our time, giving the equivalent in cash is much better, because the needs of poor people vary in nature and number. Cash can be used for whatever is necessary.

2. If one's near relatives are poor and deserve Zakāh, giving Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt to them is much better. It brings two rewards, one for the Ṣadaqah itself and the other for taking care of a near relative (*ṣilah al-raḥim*). In this case, it is simply not necessary that the recipients be told that they were being given Ṣadaqah or Zakāh. It may as well be given as some gift or favor so that the nice person who takes it does not feel humiliated.

3. There is a religious problem that bothers people frequently. For example, there is a person who, by his word or deed gives the impression of being needy, and asks for help from Ṣadaqāt etc. Now, is it necessary for people who give Ṣadaqah to first investigate his real background and give him nothing of it when approached? According to relevant reports from Ḥadīth and the statements of Muslim jurists, this is not necessary. Instead, if there is an overwhelming likelihood, as gathered from the obvious state he is in, suggesting that the person in question is really poor and needy, then, Zakāh can be given to him. It appears in Ḥadīth that some people came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a very broken-down condition. He asked people to collect Ṣadaqāt for them. The reasonably good collection thus made was given to them. He did not consider it necessary to investigate into their inward background. (Qurtubī)

4. But, in Ahkām al-Qur'ān, Al-Qurtubī says that one in debt is also one of the recipients of Zakāh. If a person says that he owes so much in debt and that he should be given Zakāh money to pay it back, then, he should be asked to prove that debt. (Qurtubī) If so, it is fairly evident that such investigation is not difficult to make in the cases of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the way of Allah) and *ibn al-sabīl* (wayfarer) as well. Investigations should be made as necessary when spending on these heads.

5. Giving Zakāh money to one's relatives is more reward-worthy, but husband and wife cannot give to each other, nor can parents and children do so. The reason is that giving to them amounts to keeping it in one's own pocket. Since their expenditures are generally combined,

a husband giving Zakāh money to his wife or the wife to her husband does not mean much. In reality, the whole remains in their use. The same holds good for parents and children and the same rule operates in the case of the children of children, the grandfather and the great-grandfather – in that giving Zakāh to them is not permissible.

6. If a person gave Zakāh to another person taking him to be, in his estimation, deserving and legally qualified to receive Zakāh, but found out later that he was either his own slave or a *kāfir*, then, Zakāh will remain unpaid. It should be given again because the ownership of a slave is nothing but the ownership of the master. Here, he is still owned by him, therefore, Zakāh remains unpaid. As for the *kāfir* (disbeliever), he is no recipient of Zakāh.

7. In addition to that, if it is proved later that the person who was given Zakāh was rich, or a Hashimite Sayyid, that is, a lineal descendant of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, or a father, or son, or wife, or husband, then, it is not necessary to repay the Zakāh. The reason is that the amount of Zakāh has gone out of his ownership and has already reached its place of reward with Allah. As for the error in determining the right recipient due to some misunderstanding, it should be taken as forgiven. (al-Durr al-Mukhtār) The explanation of the verse of Sadaqāt and the details of necessary issues related to it end here.

Verses 61 - 66

وَمِنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ قُلٍّ أَدْنَىٰ خَيْرٍ
لَّكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾
يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ لِيَرْضَوْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُرْضَوْهُ
إِنْ كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ مَنْ يُحَادِدِ اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ فَأَنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا ذَلِكَ الْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيمُ
﴿٦٣﴾ يَحْذَرُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُورَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِي
قُلُوبِهِمْ قُلِ اسْتَغْزُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَا تَخْذَرُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَئِنْ

سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ ۖ قُلْ أَبِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ
وَرَسُولِهِ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ
إِيمَانِكُمْ ۚ إِن نَّعْفُ عَنْ طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنْكُمْ نُعَذِّبُ طَآئِفَةً ۚ يَآئَهُمْ
كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

And among them there are those who hurt the Prophet and say, "He is just an ear" (hearing and believing everything). Say, "He is a good ear for you who believes in Allah and trusts the believers and is a mercy for those of you who have (truly) believed." And those who hurt the Messenger of Allah, for them there is a painful punishment. [61]

They swear by Allah to you, (O believers) so that they may please you, whereas Allah – as well as His Messenger – has greater right that they should please Him, if they are (true) believers. [62]

Have they not come to know that whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger, definite for him is the fire of Jahannam wherein he will remain forever. That is the extreme disgrace. [63]

The hypocrites are afraid that a Sūrah (a chapter of the Holy Qur'an) may be sent about them which tells them what is there in their hearts. Say, "Go on mocking. Allah is surely to bring out what you are afraid of." [64]

And if you ask them, they will say, "We were just chatting and having fun." Say, "Is it Allah and His verses and His Messenger that you were making fun of?" [65]

Make no excuses. You became disbelievers after you professed Faith. If We forgive some of you, We shall punish some others, because they were guilty. [66]

Commentary

The present verses, like the previous ones, chastise hypocrites for their absurd objections, hostility to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and their feigned professions of Faith on false oaths.

The first verse (61) mentions the painful comment made by the hypocrites against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They thought, since

he hears and believes everything, they had nothing to worry about. In the event, their conspiracy was exposed, they would simply tell him on oath that they had nothing to do with it. Allah Almighty corrected them by saying that His Messenger preferred silence against baseless hostilities because of his high morals. He did not believe in what they said. He himself knew reality as it was. He simply avoided refuting them on their faces because of his inherent gentleness of nature.

Announced in verse 64: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَا تَحَدَّرُونَ** (Allah is surely to bring out what you are afraid of) is the news that Allah will expose their conspiracy and mischief. One such event came to pass while returning from the battle of Tabūk when some hypocrites had conspired to kill the Messenger of Allah. Allah Almighty informed him about the plan through angel Jibra'īl helping him to bypass the spot where the hypocrites were sitting in ambush. (Mazharī with reference to al-Baghawī)

And Sayyidna 'Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that Allah Ta'ālā had informed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about the names of seventy hypocrites complete with their parentage and addresses. But, being the universal mercy, he did not disclose these before his people. (Mazharī)

Verses 67 - 70

الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ مِّمَّا مُرُونَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ
إِنَّ الْمُنْفِقِينَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتِ
وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ وَلَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ كَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ
قُوَّةً وَآكْثَرَ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا فَاسْتَمْتَعُوا بِخَلْقِهِمْ فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ
بِخَلْقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلْقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ
كَالَّذِي خَاضُوا أُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ
وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ أَلَمْ يَأْتِهِمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ ۖ وَقَوْمِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَأَصْحَابِ مَدْيَنَ

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكِ ۖ أَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ
وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

The hypocrites, male and female, are all alike. They bid vice and forbid virtue and withhold their hands. They forgot Allah, so He forgot them. Surely, the hypocrites are the sinners. [67]

Allah has promised the fire of Jahannam to the hypocrites, men and women, and to the disbelievers who shall live there forever. It is adequate for them. And Allah has put His curse on them, and for them there is a lasting punishment. [68]

(You are) like those before you. They were stronger than you in power, and richer in wealth and children. So, they enjoyed their share, then you enjoyed your share like those before you enjoyed their share. So, you indulged as they indulged. They are the ones whose deeds have gone waste in this world and in the Hereafter, and they are the losers. [69]

Has there not reached them the news of those before them, the people of Nūḥ (Noah) and 'Ād and Thamūd and the people of Ibrāhīm and the people of Madyan, and (the news) of the towns overturned? Their messengers came to them with clear signs; so, Allah was not to wrong them, but they have been doing wrong to their own selves. [70]

Commentary

The first verse begins with a profile of the hypocrites. One of the expressions used there: يَفْضُرُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ (and they withhold their hands) has been explained in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī as abandonment of Jihād and non-compliance of obligatory rights and duties. Then, the sentence that follows: نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ literally means 'they forgot Allah, so He forgot them.' But, Allah Ta'ālā is free of forgetfulness. So, the sense at this place is: 'those people had abandoned the commandments of Allah, as if they had forgotten it, therefore, Allah too abandoned their prospects of better life in the Hereafter, to the extent that there remained just no trace of any good, or reward, in their name.'

Let us now consider the statement: كَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ (You are) like those before you' in verse 69. According to one exegetical explanation, this is

addressed to hypocrites while according to the other explanation, the address is to Muslims. The addition of 'you are' in parenthesis points out in this direction. Thus, it means that 'you too are like people before you. They went for worldly enjoyments and forgot all about the life to come. The result was that they sank into all sorts of sins. So shall you be.'

Explaining this verse, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said that 'you too will take to the ways taken by communities before you. You will imitate them in toto as dittos and clones to the limit that should you see one of them entering into the hole of a lizard (iguana), you will follow him there too.' After having narrated this far, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه said that should anyone wish to ascertain the thematic authenticity of this Ḥadīth, let him read this verse of the Qur'an: كَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ '(You are) like those before you – 69.'

On hearing this, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: مَا أَشَبَّهَ النَّبِيُّ بِالْبَارِحَةِ that is, 'how similar is this night (in our time) to the last night (way back) – they are the people of Banī Isra'īl and we have been likened to them.' (Qurtubī)

The aim of the Ḥadīth is fairly evident. It warns that Muslims too will start following the ways of the Jews and Christians by latter times. This statement appears only after a punishment has been announced for the hypocrites. It serves as an indicator that good Muslims would not do that. Only those among them, who are weak in 'Imān may do so because they are still infected with the germs of hypocrisy. All good men and women of the Muslim community have been instructed in this verse that they should themselves abstain from such ways as well as help others do the same.

Verses 71 – 73

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ مِمَّا مَرُّونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ
وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ
حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ

تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسْكِنٌ طَيِّبَةٌ فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ
وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٧٢﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا
النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَأْوَاهُمُ
جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٧٣﴾

The believers, male and female, are friends to each other. They bid virtue and forbid vice and establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and obey Allah and His Messenger. Them Allah will bless with mercy. Surely, Allah is Powerful, Wise. [71]

Allah has promised to the believers, male and female, gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live forever and good homes in gardens of eternity. And Allah's pleasure is the greatest. That is the supreme success. [72]

O Prophet, carry out Jihād against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be strict with them. And their abode is Jahannam, and it is an evil terminus. [73]

Commentary

Previous verses mentioned hypocrites – their conspiracies, hostilities, and the punishment waiting for them. The characteristic style of the Qur'an required that true believers should also be mentioned at this place giving a view of their life style, rewards and ranks. The verses cited above do just that.

It is interesting that the text, while making a comparison between hypocrites and true believers on this occasion, has this to say: *بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ* (they are all alike - 67). However, what it has to say about true believers is: *بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ* (the believers are friends to each other - 71). This releases a hint about the nature of their mutual relationships. Hypocrites base it on functional cooperation between kinsfolk or on self-interest. Such bonds do not last long, nor do they bring the kind of spiritual benefits that are the hallmarks of a heart-to-heart friendship. Juxtaposed against hypocrites there are the true believers. They are sincere friends and wish well of each other. (Qurṭubī)

Moreover, since this friendship and concern for each other is for Al-

lah alone, it is always constant. It remains the same under all conditions, open or secret, present or absent. And it is lasting. This is the mark of a true believer. It is in the very nature of 'Imān (faith) and Al-'Amal *āṣ-Ṣālih* (good deed) that they generate mutual love and friendship. The Holy Qur'an confirms it when it says: *سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا* (19:96). It means that among those who have believed and taken to consistent good conduct in life, Allah Ta'ālā creates friendship that is deeply rooted into their hearts. What has happened to us in our time? May be we are short on the faith in our hearts and the concern for good in our conduct. That is why mutual relationships among Muslims do not seem to be what the Qur'an would like them to be. Unfortunately, these are subservient to worldly needs and interests – and are not for the sake of Allah alone, as they should be.

In the last verse (73): *جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ* (carry out Jihād against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be strict with them), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been commanded to wage Jihād against disbelievers and hypocrites both and to be strict in their case. The need to fight against belligerent disbelievers is self-evident. But, the meaning of carrying out Jihād against the hypocrites is explained by the very conduct of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It proves that Jihād against them signifies vocal Jihād through which they should be induced to understand the veracity of Islām, start to feel for it and thus become sincere in their adherence to Islām. (Qurtubī and Mazharī) Please bear in mind that the real meaning of the word: غلظ (*ghilaz*) used in: وَاغْلُظْ (and be strict with them) is that one should not show any leniency or grant any concessions in taking a course of action which the person addressed deserves. This word is used as an antonym to رَأْفَة (*rāfah*) which means mercy and kindheartedness.

In his comments, Imām al-Qurtubī has said that the use of the word: *ghilzah* (strictness) at this place means that leniency should not be shown and concessions should not be granted when the injunctions of Shari'ah are enforced on them. This approach has nothing to do with being vocally strict – because, that is against the favored practice of the blessed prophets. They are never harsh in speech, nor do they curse and swear. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: *إِذَا زَنَتْ أَمَةٌ أَحَدَكُمْ فَلْيَجْلِدْهَا الْحَدَّ وَلَا يَتَرَبَّعَ عَلَيْهَا* (If a bondswoman of anyone among you commits fornication, just enforce the Islāmic legal pun-

ishment for it on her – but, do not denounce her verbally) (Qurtubī)

Alluding to the persona of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – the image he exuded in his presence before people – Allah Ta‘ālā has Himself said: وَلَوْ كُنْتَ ظَنًّا غَلِظَ الْقَلْبُ لَا نَفَضُوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ: (and had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you – 3:159). Then, there is no evidence even from the actual dealings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he ever demonstrated any harsh attitude in conversation or address before disbelievers and hypocrites.

A warning signal

It is certainly a matter of regret that the attitude of harshness in address and conversation was something Islām never took to even against Kuffār, the rigid and hostile disbelievers. But, contemporary Muslims would not bat an eye and use it against other Muslims – not to say much about many of those who would congratulate themselves for having done this as some service to their religion. *Innalillah ...*

Verses 74 – 78

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ
إِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَمُّوا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوا وَمَا نَقَمُوا إِلَّا أَنْ أَغْنَاهُمُ اللَّهُ
وَرَسُولُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ؕ فَإِنْ يَتُوبُوا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ؕ وَإِنْ يَتَوَلَّوْا
يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۖ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنُ عَاهَدَ اللَّهَ
لَئِنْ آتَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾
فَلَمَّا آتَاهُم مِّنْ فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾
فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِم إِلَى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا أَخْلَفُوا اللَّهَ مَا
وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ
سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿٧٨﴾

They swear by Allah that they said nothing while, indeed, they had said the word of infidelity and had disbelieved after having accepted Islām, and had intended what they could not achieve. And they showed resent-

ment against nothing but that Allah and His Messenger have made them rich with His grace. So, if they repent, it will be good for them, and if they turn away, Allah shall punish them with a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there is neither a friend on the Earth, nor a helper. [74]

And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allah: "If He gives us (wealth) out of His grace, then, surely we shall give alms and shall be among the righteous." [75]

But when He gave them (wealth) of His grace, they became stingy about it, and went back turning their faces away. [76]

So Allah, in turn, put hypocrisy in their hearts till the day they shall meet Him, because they broke their promise with Allah and because they have been telling lies. [77] Did they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they whisper and that Allah is the well-aware of all the unseen. [78]

Commentary

In the first verse: يَخْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ (They swear by Allah -74), the text reverts to the hypocrites who keep uttering words of infidelity in their gatherings but, should Muslims come to know about that, they would promptly declare on oath that they had nothing to do with it. Giving the background in which this verse was revealed, Al-Baghawī reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave an address on the occasion of the battle of Tabūk. He talked about the sorry state of affairs the hypocrites were in and warned them of their sad end. Also present there was Jullās, a hypocrite. When he returned to his people, he said 'if whatever Muḥammad says is true, then, we are worse than donkeys.' By chance, a Ṣaḥābī whose name was 'Āmir ibn Qays heard the comment. He told him that 'there is no doubt about what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said for it is true and you are really worse than donkeys.'

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned to Madīnah back from his trip to Tabūk, 'Āmir ibn Qays told him about this event. But, Jullās flatly disowned what he had said. On top of that, he charged 'Āmir ibn Qays of having accused him falsely. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered both of them to stand close to the *Mimbar* of the *Nabiyy*

(the stepped platform used to deliver *khuṭbah* in the *masjid* originally occupied by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and traditionally regarded as a symbol of his message) and take an oath. Jullās was quick to take a false oath to the effect that he never said that and that ‘Āmir was lying. When it was ‘Āmir’s turn, he took his oath. Then, he raised his hands of prayer before Allah saying, ‘O Allah, let Your Messenger know about the reality of this matter through a revelation to him.’ The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said ‘Āmīn (amen) following his prayer and so did all Muslims present there. These people had yet to move from there when came Angel Jibra’īl with the revelation which included this verse.

When Jullās heard this verse, he stood up immediately and started saying, ‘yā rasūlallāh, now I confess that I was the one in the wrong and that which was said by ‘Āmir was the truth. But, this very verse has also given me the right of making Taubah (repentance). Hence, I seek forgiveness from Allah and repent for what I did earlier.’ The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted his Taubah after which he stayed firm in it and things turned towards the better in his life. (Mazharī)

Some commentators have referred to similar events as the background of the revelation of this verse – especially as this verse includes the sentence: وَهَمُّوْا بِمَا كُمْ يَنْتَلُوْا (and had intended what they could not achieve -74). This sentence seems to suggest that the verse is connected with some event when the hypocrites had hatched some conspiracy against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Muslim followers in which they could not succeed. For example, there is a fairly well known incident that came to pass during the return from this very battle of Tabūk. Twelve men from among the hypocrites sat in ambush behind a mountain pass with the intention of taking the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by surprise and kill him. Angel Jibra’īl informed him of their intention. He took a different route and their conspiracy went to dust.

For that matter, several other events of this nature are also on record. But, there is no element of contradiction or improbability in the likelihood that all those events are being referred to through this verse.

The second verse: وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللّٰهَ (And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allah - 75) is also connected with a particular

event which has been reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Marduwayh, Al-Ṭabarānī and Al-Baihaqī on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhili رضى الله عنه. According to this report, a person called Tha‘labah ibn Ḥaṭib al-Anṣarī presented himself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and requested him to pray that he becomes rich. He said, ‘Is it that you do not like my way? By the Being that holds my life in his His hands, if I had wished, mountains of Madīnah would have turned into solid gold following behind me on my walkways. But, I do not like being that wealthy.’ The man went away. But, he returned later and repeated his request for the same prayer with the pledge that, should he get the wealth prayed for, he would give every deserving person his share from it. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made the prayer. The effect of the prayer showed up in an unprecedented increase in the number of goats he owned. When the number increased further, the space in Madīnah became too small for him. So, he moved out into the outskirts from where he used to come to Madīnah where he offered the Ṣalāh of Zuh̄r and ‘Aṣr with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. As for the rest of the prayers, he used to perform these in the wilderness where his herd of goats, his prized possession, was located.

Then, this very flock of goats became so large that even that area on the outskirts became insufficient. He moved farther away from Madīnah coming there only on Fridays for the Jumu‘ah Ṣalāh. As for the five daily prayers, he did them where he was stationed. Then came further increases in his wealth and he had to leave that spot too, only to go far away from Madīnah where he sat deprived of his Jumu‘ah and Jama‘ah both.

After the passage of some time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked people about him. They told him that his ‘wealth’ had increased to such proportions that he had to go far away from Madīnah and that is why he is not seen in the city. On hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: رَوَيْتُ نَعْلَبَةَ (Alas for Tha‘labah) three times.

By chance, it was the time when came the revelation of the verse of Ṣadaqāt (60) where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been commanded to collect Ṣadaqāt from Muslims – (خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً). He had the whole law of Ṣadaqāt committed to writing, appointed two persons as the collectors of Ṣadaqah and sent them to collect the Ṣadaqāt due on live-

stock owned by Muslims. They were ordered to go to Tha'labah ibn Ḥaṭīb as well, and to another person from the tribe of Banī Sulaym also.

When the two collectors reached Tha'labah and presented the order of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he said that this thing had become a sort of Jizyah which is taken from non-Muslims. Then he hedged and asked them to leave on that occasion, however, they could call on him on their way back. The two of them left.

Something different happened in the case of the other person from the tribe of Banī Sulaym. When he heard about the order of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he himself called on the two emissaries of his master carrying with him the best from out of his livestock of camels and goats, precisely according to his Zakatable *niṣāb* of Ṣadaqah. They told him that they have orders not to pick out the best among animals, in fact, they were supposed to take the average ones, therefore, they could not take these. The man from Banī Sulaym insisted that it was his pleasure to present those very animals and requested that they be accepted as they were.

After that, when these two emissaries had completed their circuit of Ṣadaqah collection, they returned to Tha'labah. He told them that he wanted to see that Law of Ṣadaqah they were talking about. He looked at it and said no more than what he had said earlier – 'this thing has become a sort of Jizyah that should not be taken from Muslims.' 'All right,' he said, 'you can go for now. I have to think about it first. I will decide later.'

When these two gentlemen reached Madīnah, they went to see the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. At that time he, before hearing their report on the mission, repeated the words he had said earlier: **يَا وَجِعْ ثَعْلَبَةَ يَا وَجِعْ ثَعْلَبَةَ** (Alas for Tha'labah). He said it three times. After that, he was pleased to hear about the Sulaymī deal and prayed for him. Thereupon, came the verse: **وَرَبُّهُمْ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ** (And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allah – 75). It means: 'if Allah gave them wealth, they would give out alms and charities and fulfill the rights of all deserving people, the relatives and the poor, as done by the righteous people of the community. But, when Allah blessed them with wealth, out of His grace, they became misers overnight and turned away from their pledge of obedience to Allah and His Messenger.'

Verse 77: **فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِم** (So Allah, in turn, put hypocrisy in their hearts) points out to its cause which lies in their lying and pledge breaking. As a consequence, Allah made the hypocrisy of their hearts become deep and firm. Now, they would just not have the ability to make Taubah itself.

A serious note of warning

From here we learn that there are occasions when the curse of evil deeds assumes alarming proportions, so much so that one is deprived of the very ability (*taufīq*) of making Taubah. May Allah protect us from this misfortune!

Let us now go back to the detailed narrative of Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضى الله عنه mentioned a little earlier. Ibn Jarīr writes at the end of it: When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said ‘Alas for Tha‘labah’ three times, some of his relatives were present in the gathering. When they heard it, one of them immediately traveled to see Tha‘labah. When he reached there, he reproached him for his behavior while informing him that it has caused the revelation of a particular verse of the Qur’ān. This made Tha‘labah nervous. He reached Madīnah and requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that his Ṣadaqah may be accepted. He said that Allah Ta‘ālā had told him not to accept his Ṣadaqah. Hearing this, Tha‘labah went crazy with disappointment and literally started throwing dust on his head.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, ‘this is something you have chosen to do on your own. I ordered you and you did not obey. Now, your Ṣadaqah cannot be accepted.’ Tha‘labah returned disappointed. Then, some days later, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم departed from this mortal world and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه became the Khalīfah. Tha‘labah came to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه and requested that he should accept his Ṣadaqah. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه said, ‘when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not accept it, how can I do it?’

Then, after the demise of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, Tha‘labah came to Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه. He made the same request and got the same answer from him, as was given by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه. Again, he submitted this request to Sayyidnā Uthmān رضى الله عنه during his period of Khilāfah. He too refused it. It was during the tenure of the Khilāfah of Sayyidnā Uthmān رضى الله عنه that Tha‘labah died. We seek the protection of Allah from all evil deeds. (Mazharī)

A question and its answer

When Tha'labah had submitted in repentance, the question is why was his Taubah not accepted? The reason is evident. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was informed through revelation that he was not making his Taubah with absolute sincerity. He had hypocrisy concealed in his heart. He was simply trying to deceive Muslims for the time being only to put matters right between them. Therefore, it was not acceptable. And when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself declared him to be a hypocrite, the Khulafā' who succeeded him were left with no right to accept his Ṣadaqah – because, being a Muslim is a condition for Zakāh. Now, after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, no one knows the hypocrisy hidden in the heart of a person, therefore, the rule to follow in future is: Anyone who makes Taubah and confesses to his Islām and 'Īmān should be treated as Muslims are treated – no matter what lies in his heart. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 79 – 80

الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٩﴾ اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

Those who find fault with believers who voluntarily give alms and have nothing but their hard earnings – still they mock at them – mocked they are by Allah and for them there is a painful punishment. [79]

Ask pardon for them or do not ask pardon for them – even if you ask pardon for them seventy times, Allah shall never pardon them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger. And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path. [80]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first verse (79) are taunts thrown at Muslims who gave away in charity on a voluntary basis (*Naflī Ṣadaqāt*). It appears

in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that Sayyidnā Abū Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه said: 'we had orders from Allah Ta'ālā that we must give Ṣadaqah and, believe it, we used to do manual labor for that (that is, we had no money or thing with us. We used to take out that Ṣadaqah too from whatever we earned through this very manual labor). Thus, Abū 'Aqīl offered Ṣadaqah to the measure of 0.5 Ṣā' (approximately 1.75 kilos). Then, someone came and gave a little more than that. The hypocrites mocked at them for having brought something so insignificant in the name of Ṣadaqah. Allah never needs things like that. And whoever gave a little more in Ṣadaqah, they accused him that he had done it to show off before people. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Please note that, in the sentence: سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ (mocked they are by Allah - 79), the word 'mocked' stands for 'punished for their mockery'.

In the second verse (80), there is a statement about the hypocrites. It has been addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He has been told whether or not he seeks forgiveness for them makes no difference – and no matter how many times he seeks forgiveness for them, they shall not be forgiven. A detailed explanation of this appears under the comments on verse 84: لَا تُصَلِّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ (and never offer a prayer on any one of them who dies) appearing a little later.

Verses 81 – 83

فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خِلْفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَكَرِهُوا أَنْ يُجَاهِدُوا
بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَالُوا لَا تَنْفِرُوا فِي الْحَرِّ
قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشَدُّ حَرًّا لَوْ كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ فَلْيَضْحَكُوا
قَلِيلًا وَلْيَبْكُوا كَثِيرًا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَإِنْ
رَجَعَكَ اللَّهُ إِلَى طَائِفَةٍ مِنْهُمْ فَاسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِلْخُرُوجِ فَقُلْ لَنْ
تَخْرُجُوا مَعِيَ أَبَدًا وَلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا إِنَّكُمْ رَضِيتُمْ
بِالْفُتُورِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَافْعَدُوا مَعَ الْخُلَفَاءِ ﴿٨٣﴾

Those who were left behind were happy with their sitting back to the displeasure of the Messenger of Allah, and they disliked to carry out *jihād* in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives, and they said, "Do not

march in this hot weather.” Say, “The fire of Jahannam is more intense in heat,” only if they could understand.

[81]

So, let them laugh a little, and weep a lot, being a reward of what they used to earn. [82]

Then, if Allah brings you back to a group of them and they seek your permission to march, say to them, “You shall never march with me ever after, and shall never fight an enemy in my company. You were happy with sitting back the first time; now, sit with those remaining behind.” [83]

Commentary

Behavior patterns of hypocrites who did not take part in the battle of Tabūk, despite the general call of Jihād, continue to be the main theme since several previous verses.

The current verses give another example of their behavior. Then, it was said that they will be punished in the Hereafter, their names will be eliminated from the list of the *mujāhidīn* of Islām forever in this mortal world and that they will never be allowed to take part in any future Jihād.

The word: *مُخَلَّفُونَ* (those who were left behind – 81) is the plural of *مُخَلَّفٌ* (*mukhallaf*) which means ‘abandoned’ or left out. The subtle hint thus released is that these people are pleased with the idea that they have stayed away from endangering their lives by not participating in the Jihād. But, the truth of the matter is that Allah Ta‘ālā did not consider them to be worthy of this supreme honor. Therefore, it is not they who have abandoned the Jihād, in fact, it is Jihād that has abandoned them. The reason is that Allah and His Messenger have, at their discretion, considered it fit that they should be left out.

Following immediately, there is the word: *خَلْفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ* (*khilāf*) in: *خَلْفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ* translated as ‘to the displeasure of the Messenger of Allah.’ This word could be taken in the sense of ‘behind’ or ‘after’ as well. In fact, this is the meaning Abū ‘Ubayd has gone by. If so, it would mean that these people were rejoicing in their staying (at home) after (the departure of) the Messenger of Allah – an occasion not really worth the mirth. As for the word: *يَتَّبِعُونَهُمْ* (*bimaq‘adhim*: their sitting back) in the same verse, it appears here in the sense of *تَعُدُّ* (*qu‘ūd*: sitting) as a verbal noun.

It is also possible to take the word *khilāf* in the sense of *mukhālafat* (contravention, opposition). In that case, it would mean that they sat home in contravention of the command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, they did not leave it at that. They prompted others too by saying that they should not march in that hot weather: (لَا تَنْفِرُوا فِي الْحَرِّ).

We already know that the command to fight the battle of Tabūk was given at a time when the heat was intense. The rejoinder to their comment came from Allah Ta‘ālā: قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشَدُّ حَرًّا (Say: [O Prophet] the fire of Jahannam is more intense in heat) that is, these people are really unfortunate. They see the heat of a certain given time and try to beat it one way or the other. But, they do not realize that their disobedience to the command of Allah and His Messenger would bring them face to face with the fire of Jahannam. Why would they not worry about it? Is it that the heat of our seasons is more intense than the heat of Hell?

After that it was said: فَلْيَضْحَكُوا قَلِيلًا (So, let them laugh a little, and weep a lot, being a reward of what they used to earn – 82). Though, the word ‘*falyaḍḥakū*’ (So, laugh) has been used in the imperative form, but commentators interpret it in the sense of the predicate of a nominal clause. The wisdom behind the use of the imperative form given by them is that this is categorical and certain. In other words, this is going to happen as a matter of certainty. Such people could laugh for the days they have in the mortal world - but, in ‘Ākhirah, they must weep and weep forever.

Commentator Ibn Abī Ḥatīm reports the explanation of this verse from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه as follows:

الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ فَلْيَضْحَكُوا فِيهَا مَا شَاءُوا فَإِذَا انْقَطَعَتِ الدُّنْيَا وَصَارُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ
فَلْيَسْتَأْنِفُوا الْبُكَاءَ بُكَاءٌ لَا يَنْقَطِعُ أَبَدًا

The *dunyā* (present world) is short-lived. So, let them laugh therein as they wish but when ‘*dunyā*’ will come to an end and they will start coming to Allah, then, they will start weeping, a weeping which will never come to an end. (Mazharī)

The statement: لَنْ تَخْرُجُوا ... you shall never march) in the second verse (83) has been explained by Maulanā Ashraf ‘Alī Thanavī in the summary of his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur‘ān. According to him, ‘even if these people intend to participate in a future Jihād, they

would get out of it when they want to, under one or the other pretext; and since they do not have faith in their heart, their intention too will not be backed by sincerity. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was commanded that, even if they want to take part in a Jihād, he should tell them the truth that he does not trust their word and deed. So, they would neither go for Jihād nor fight an enemy of Islām in his company.'

Most of the commentators have said that this injunction has been enforced as their punishment in the present world, that is, even if they themselves were to make a request that they be allowed to take part in Jihād, even then, they should not be allowed to do that.

Verse 84

وَلَا تَصَلِّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّتَّ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَى قَبْرِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ فَسِقُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

And never offer a prayer on any one of them who dies, and do not stand by his grave. They disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger and died while they were sinners. [84]

Commentary

It stands established from Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth, and confirmed by a consensus of the Muslim Ummah on it that this verse was revealed at the time of the death of the hypocrite, 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy, and about the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him. Then, it also stands established from the report in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم offered Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him. After he had done it, this verse was revealed. And thereafter, he never offered the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for any *munāfiq* (hypocrite).

The background in which this verse was revealed appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. According to this report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه, when 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy ibn Salūl died, his son 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He was a sincere Muslim, and a Ṣaḥābī. When he requested for his shirt so that he could use it as a shroud for the dead body of his father, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم let him have it. Then, he requested him to also lead the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for his father. He accepted and rose to do

that. At that point, Sayyidnā ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه held the fall of his shirt cloth and said: ‘you are going to lead the Janāzah Ṣalāh for this *munāfiq* although Allah Ta‘ālā has prohibited you from doing that.’ The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: ‘Allah Ta‘ālā has given me a choice. I may pray for their forgiveness, or I may not – and as for forgiveness not to be granted even if prayed for it seventy times as in the verse, I can say that I can do that more than seventy times.’ The verse referred to here is verse 80 of Sūrah Al-Taubah which you have gone through a little earlier. For your convenience, its words are: **اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ** (Ask pardon for them or do not ask pardon for them; even if you ask pardon for them seventy times, Allah shall never pardon them). Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم offered the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him. Soon after the Ṣalāh, this verse: **لَا تَصَلِّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ** (And never offer a prayer on any one of them...) was revealed (so, after that, he never led the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for any *munāfiq*).

Removal of ambiguities concerning this event

A question arises here about ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy, a *munāfiq* whose hypocrisy was laid bare on many different occasions and who was regarded as ring leader of all hypocrites. How was it that he received such unusual treatment from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he gave his blessed shirt to be used as his funeral shroud?

In answer, two reasons can be given for it. Firstly, it was done on the request of his son who was a sincere Ṣaḥābī and the motive was simply to console him on his loss. There could be a second reason as well. This has been reported in Al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه. When some Quraysh chiefs were arrested on the occasion of the battle of Badr, one of them happened to be ‘Abbās, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When he saw that his uncle does not have a shirt on his body, he asked his Companions to put a shirt on him. Sayyidnā ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه was tall. No shirt other than that of ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy would fit him. So, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took the shirt from ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy and had his uncle ‘Abbās wear it. It was only to repay this favor that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had given his shirt for him. (Qurtubī)

The second question relates to what Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه had said to the Holy Prophet. It will be recalled that he had said, ‘Allah Ta‘ālā has prohibited you from leading the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for a hypo-

crite.' We have to look for the basis on which he said that, because no verse had ever prohibited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم expressly from offering the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for a hypocrite. From here it becomes fairly clear that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه must have deduced that sense of prohibition from this very verse of Sūrah Al-Taubah referred earlier, that is, اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ (Ask pardon for them...80). Now the question is, if this verse of prohibition refers to the Ṣalāh of Janāzah, why would the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not let this be regarded as prohibited, instead of which, he said that the choice in the verse had been given to him?

The answer is that, in reality, the formal arrangement of words in the verse does carry the sense of giving a choice – and it is also obvious that the mention of seventy times at this place is not for prescribing a limit. It is, rather, to express the sense of many times. Thus, the outcome of the verse, in terms of its obvious sense, turns out to be that 'a hypocrite will not be pardoned, no matter how many times you were to seek forgiveness for him.' But, he has not been expressly prohibited from praying for their forgiveness as such. Another verse of the Holy Qur'an from Sūrah Yā Sīn is a parallel example. There it has been said: سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (And it is all the same for them whether or not you warn them – they are not going to believe – 36:10). This verse has not categorically stopped him from warning people of evils and inviting them to what is good. For that matter, some other verses of the Qur'an also prove that the ongoing mission of calling people towards the faith never stopped. Of course, it included such people as well – for example, بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ (O Messenger, convey all that has been sent down to you from your Lord. – 5:67) and إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ (you are only a warner, and for every people, there is a guide – 13:7). The outcome is that the verse of Sūrah Yā Sīn (36:10) quoted above proved that choice was given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, though in a limited frame of reference. Then, the later verses quoted immediately earlier provided the standing proof of the continuance of the mission of warning people against evils. From the verse under study too, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had gathered that they will not be pardoned, but the situation was that he had not been restrained from seeking forgiveness for them through some other verse either, till then.

Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also knew that neither his

shirt nor the Ṣalāh of Janāzah he offered for the deceased hypocrite were to bring forgiveness for him. But, he did hope that his action would yield benefits for other aspects of Islāmic public policy. People of his family and the disbelieving people in general were bound to observe the way the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم deals with their leader. This was likely to bring them closer to Islām, even embracing it. As for some clear prohibition of offering the Ṣalāh of Janāzah, it just did not exist until that time. Therefore, he led the Ṣalāh.

Perhaps, the other answer lies in the sentence that has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه. There, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been quoted to have said: ‘Had I known that he will be pardoned by praying for his forgiveness more than seventy times, I would have done that too.’ (Qurtubī)

The second evidence comes from another Ḥadīth in which the following words from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have been reported: ‘my shirt cannot save him from the punishment of Allah. But, I did it in the hope that on the basis of this action thousands of his people will embrace Islām.’ So, according to what was said, after having witnessed this event, one thousand people from the tribe of Khazraj embraced Islām (as reported in the books of *maghāzi* and in some books of Tafsīr).

Summary

To sum up, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم knew from previous verses that no matter what they do, the *munāfiqs* (the hypocrites) will not be pardoned. But, there were some factors that explain the rationale of his action. The words of the verse seemed to have given him the choice. No other verse had yet prohibited him from doing so. Then, there was the opportunity to pay back the favor of a disbeliever here in this world. Last, but not the least, was the hope of other disbelievers embracing Islām as a result of this action. Therefore, he preferred to lead the Ṣalāh of Janāzah. As for the action of Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه, he thought that once it stands proved through the verse in question that a hypocrite will not be pardoned, he found no reason for offering a Ṣalāh of Janāzah for him and praying that he may be forgiven. According to him, it might be redundant, and against the station of a prophet. Therefore, he deemed it prohibited to offer the *janazah*. The posi-

tion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was that he did not, though, consider this action as beneficial in its own right – but, he did have the likelihood of others embracing Islām in sight. Therefore, this action did not remain futile. To conclude, in this manner, no ambiguity remains either in the conduct of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or in the words of Sayyidna ‘Umar رضى الله عنه. (Bayān al-Qur’ān)

Now, came the verse: لَا تَصَلِّ (and never offer a prayer) revealed in clear terms. It was realized that, no doubt, there was a religiously expedient advantage visible to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in offering the Ṣalāh but it also carried a disturbing factor in it, almost the reverse of what was expected to be expedient. This element somehow did not attract the attention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The likelihood of this action creating dissatisfaction among sincere Muslims was strong. They may have thought that sincere Muslims and wily hypocrites have been equated officially. To offset this danger, this particular prohibition was revealed in the Qur’ān – and after that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ never offered the Ṣalāh of Janāzah for any *munāfiq*.

Rulings

1. This verse tells us that offering Ṣalāh on the Janāzah of a *kāfir* or the making of Du‘ā seeking his or her forgiveness is not permissible.

2. This verse also proves that to stand before the grave of a *kāfir* as a mark of respect for him, or to go to visit it, is *ḥarām*. Should this be to learn some lesson therefrom, or because of some compulsion, then, it is not contrary to this. For example, it appears in Hidāyah that, should a *kāfir* relative of a Muslim die without leaving a guardian or heir behind, the Muslim relative can put the deceased into hollowed ground as is, without having to make it conform to the standard practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. (Bayān al-Qur’ān)

Verses 85 – 89

وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَإِذَا أَنْزَلْتُ
سُورَةً أَنْ آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَجَاهِدُوا مَعَ رَسُولِهِ اسْتَأْذَنَكَ أُولُوا
الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ رَضُوا بِأَنْ

يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾
 لَكِنَّ الرَّسُولَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ جَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ
 وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَاتُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ
 جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
 الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٨٩﴾

And their wealth and children should not attract you. Allah only wants to punish them with these in this world and that their souls depart while they are disbelievers. [85]

And when a Sūrah is revealed (saying), "Believe in Allah and carry out *jihād* in the company of His Messenger" the capable ones from them seek your permission and say, "Let us remain with those sitting back." [86]

They are happy to be with women who sit back, and their hearts are sealed; so they do not understand. [87]

But the Messenger and the believers in his company have carried out *jihād* with their wealth and lives, and for them there are the good things, and they are the successful. [88] Allah has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow where they will live forever. That is the supreme success. [89]

Commentary

Once again, the present verses carry the description of hypocrites who had avoided participating in the battle of Tabūk under one or the other pretext. Among such hypocrites, there were some rich people as well. Their affluent life could have made Muslims ask, 'when these people are so unacceptable with Allah, why did they have to get all those blessings in this world?'

In response, it was said that a little thinking would unfold the reality behind what they possess in the form of wealth and children. These are no mercy and blessing for them. Instead, these are their trial and punishment in this world – not to say much about the additional punishment due in the Hereafter. It is not difficult to understand the reason. They love wealth, guard it and keep worrying as to how they can go on increasing it. They are never at peace. They collect things of

comfort around them but genuine peace and comfort never knock at their doors, for they are things of the heart. And since this engrossment in the pursuit of wealth makes them heedless towards the concerns of the Hereafter, they indulge in acts of disobedience to their Creator that in turn becomes the cause of their punishment. So, whether a cause or its effect, it remains a punishment. This is the reason why the Qur'ān has used the words: لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا (to punish them with these) in the sense that Allah Ta'ālā wants to punish them by and through these very possessions.

The expression: أُولُوا الطَّوْلِ (ulu 'at-ṭaul: translated as 'the capable ones') (86) is not for particularization. Instead, it serves a purpose. It tells that there were others too, the ones not so capable. And the incapable ones had, at least, some obvious excuse to stay behind.

Verse 90

وَجَاءَ الْمُعَذِّرُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا
اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٠﴾

And the excuse-makers from the Bedouins came that they might be allowed (to stay behind), while those who were false to Allah and His Messengers (just) stayed behind. A painful punishment is about to fall upon those of them who disbelieve. [90]

Commentary

The details given in the verse tell us that there were two kinds of people among the Bedouins of the desert. First, there were those who visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and requested that they might be excused from Jihād and allowed to stay behind. Then, there were the arrogant and rebellious among them who did not even bother to take the trouble of excusing themselves out of it. They just stayed behind.

'When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم allowed Jadd ibn Qays that he may not go on Jihād,' says Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh, رضى الله عنه, 'some hypocrites also came to him, offered their excuses and sought his permission to stay out of Jihād. As for the permission, he let them have it, but he did realize that they were making false excuses, therefore, he turned away from them. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.'

It made it clear that their excuse was unacceptable. Therefore, they were served with the warning of a painful punishment. However, by saying: الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ (those of them who disbelieve), a hint was given that the excuse given by some of them was not because of their disbelief or hypocrisy, rather, it was because of their natural laziness. So, they were not to be affected by the punishment to fall upon those disbelievers.

Verses 91 – 93

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضَّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩١﴾ وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ إِذَا مَا أَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَا أَجِدُ مَا أَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ تَوَلَّوْا وَاعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَرَنًا أَلَّا يَجِدُوا مَا يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءُ رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

There is no blame on the weak, or on the sick, or on those who have nothing to spend, if they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger. There is no way against those good in deeds. And Allah is most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [91]

Nor (is there any blame) on those who – when they came to you so that you might provide them with a carrier and you said (to them), “I find no carrier to give to you” – went back, their eyes flowing with tears grieving that they had nothing to spend. [92]

Blame lies, in fact, on those who ask you permission despite being rich. They are happy being with women who sit back. And Allah has sealed their hearts; so they do not know. [93]

Commentary

Previous verses mentioned people who were not really excusable from participation in Jihād but sat it out because of laziness. Then, there were hypocrites who had taken permission from the Holy Proph-

et صلى الله عليه وسلم under false pretexts because of their disbelief and hypocrisy. And then there were the arrogant ones who did not bother about excuses and permissions and just sat back. They were told there that they were not excusable and that there was a painful punishment waiting for those of them who practiced disbelief and hypocrisy.

The present verses mention sincere Muslims who were deprived of participation in Jihād because they were genuinely incapable of doing so. Some of them were blind, or sick, or handicapped. Their excuse was all too evident. Then, there were some of those who were ready to take part in Jihād, in fact, were 'dying' to go into the Jihād, but they could not make the trip because they did not have an animal to ride on. The journey was long and the weather was very hot. They told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم how eager they were to participate in the Jihād but how unfortunate that they had nothing to ride on. They requested him to see if they could have some mounts.

There are many events of this nature recorded in books of Exegesis and History. So, different things happened. To some of them who came initially, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had no choice but to say that they had no arrangements to provide mounts to warriors. But, these people returned from him weeping and when they kept weeping in despair, Allah Ta'ālā took care of them in His own way. Six camels arrived before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم right at that time. He let them have these. (Maḏharī) Then, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه arranged mounts for three of them, although he had already made similar arrangements for many more of them earlier.

Ultimately, there were some of them still left out for the simple reason that they could not find a mount. Rendered totally helpless, they could do nothing about their aspirations for Jihād. These are the kinds of people mentioned in the cited verses whose excuse was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. However, at the end, the warning was repeated by saying that particularly cursed are those who, despite their ability, elected to stay away from Jihād like women. The sentence: **إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءُ** (Blame lies, in fact, on those who ask your permission despite being rich - 93) means exactly this.

Verses 94 - 96

يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ قُلْ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا لَنْ تُؤْمِنَ

لَكُمْ قَدْ بَيَّأَنَا اللَّهُ مِنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ^ط وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ
 ثُمَّ تَرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
 تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ سَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ
 لَتَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ^ط فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ^ط إِنَّهُمْ رَجَسٌ وَمَا بِهِمْ
 جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاءً^١ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لَتَرْضُوا
 عَنْهُمْ فَإِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ
 الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾

They will make excuses to you when you return to them. Say, "Do not make excuses. We shall never believe you. Allah has told us the facts about you. And Allah will see what you do, and His Messenger as well. Then you shall be returned to the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen, and He will tell you what you have been doing." [94]

They will swear by Allah before you, so that you may ignore their misdeed. So, you ignore them. They are filth, and their abode is Jahannam, as a recompense for what they used to do. [95]

They swear before you so that you may be pleased with them. So, even if you are pleased with them, Allah will not be pleased with the sinning people. [96]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses were hypocrites who came up with false excuses at the time Jihād forces were getting ready to march out and succeeded in being allowed to stay behind. The present verses mention those who visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after his return from Jihād and offered false excuses for their absence from it. These verses had been revealed before his return to Madīnah and had told him beforehand about the forthcoming event, that is, the hypocrites will come to him as soon as he reaches Madīnah and will offer their excuses. And so it happened.

Three instructions about them have been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the verses cited above. These are as follows:

1. When they come to make excuses, they should be told that they

do not have to make false excuses for they were not going to be believed in their word. Allah Ta'ālā had already told the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the condition of their thinking and doing including the details of their wicked plans and secret intentions. This was enough to prove that they were liars, therefore, offering excuses makes no sense. After that, it was said: **وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ** (And Allah will see what you do...). Here, respite has been given to them so that they could still make their Tau-bah (repentance), renounce Nifaq (hypocrisy) and become true Muslims – because, the wording of the text stipulates that Allah and His Messenger shall see what they do and how they do it. In other words, action shall be taken in consonance with their behavior pattern. If they repented sincerely and became true Muslims, their sins shall stand forgiven. Otherwise, these false excuses were not going to do them any good.

2. The second instruction to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appears in the second verse (95) where it has been said that these people will come to him after his return to Madīnah, impress him with their feigned oaths and try to satisfy him. What they would wish to achieve from this initiative is: **لِتَغْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ** (so that you may ignore their misdeed), that is, 'ignore their absence from Jihād and spare the reproach due on it.' Thereupon, it was said that he might as well grant their wish. The text says: **فَاَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ** 'you ignore them.' Thus, the instruction carries the sense: 'neither reproach and admonish, nor deal with pleasantly' – because, reproach usually brings no good. When they have no faith in their heart – and they do not want to have it either – what would come out of reproach? So, why waste good time!

3. The third instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appears in the third verse (96): "They swear before you so that you may be pleased with them." The order of Allah Ta'ālā is that their wish was not to be granted and he was not to be pleased with them. However, it was also said that, 'even if you were to be pleased with them, it was not going to work for them in any manner, because Allah is not pleased with them. And how could Allah be pleased with them when they are still adamant about their denial and hypocrisy?

Verses 97 – 99

الْأَعْرَابُ أَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَنِفَاقًا وَأَجْدَرُ أَلَّا يَعْلَمُوا حُدُودَ مَا أَنْزَلَ

اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَن
يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَائِرَ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ
السَّوءِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَن يُؤْمِنُ
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرْبَتٍ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَصَلَوَاتُ
الرَّسُولِ ۖ إِلَّا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ ۖ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ ۖ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٩٩﴾

The Bedouins are often more strict in disbelief and hypocrisy and are most likely to be ignorant of the limits of what Allah has sent down to His Messenger. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [97]

And among the Bedouins there are those who take what they spend as a penalty and they look forward to the cycles of time to turn against you. Upon those is the evil cycle. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [98]

And among the Bedouins there are others who believe in Allah and in the Last Day and take what they spend as a source of nearness to Allah and of prayers from the Messenger. It is indeed a source of nearness for them. Allah will admit them to His mercy. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [99]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses were the hypocrites of Madīnah. The present verses mention hypocrites who lived on the desert around the outskirts of Madīnah.

The word *الاعراب* (*al-a'rāb*) is not a plural form of *العرب* (*al-'arab*). It is اسم جمع (*ism al-jam'*: collective noun) and is used for the Bedouins of the desert. In its singular form, it becomes *الاعرابي* (*al-a'rābiyy*) – similar to (*al-anṣariyy*), the singular form of *الانصار* (*al-anṣār*).

According to their condition described in verse 97, they outdid city dwellers in disbelief and hypocrisy. The reason given is that these people generally remained ignorant and hard-hearted as they lived far away from knowledge and the knowledgeable. Then the text says: 'the Bedouins are more likely to be ignorant of the limits of what Allah has sent down.' It means that the very surroundings in which they live are such as would keep them in the dark about the limits set by Allah

through the revelation – because the Qur'ān does not come before them, nor do they have access to its meanings, explanations and injunctions.

In the second verse (98) too, yet another aspect of the condition of these very Bedouins has been described as: 'those who take what they spend (in Zakāh etc.) as a penalty.' Why would they do so? The reason is that they hardly have any faith in their heart. When it comes to making Ṣalāh, they would, though, do that, but just to camouflage their disbelief. They would even fulfill the obligation of Zakāh, but their hearts would keep worrying as to why they had to put good money down the drain. Therefore, they always look forward to the time when Muslims are hit by some calamity or defeat that may possibly deliver them from having to pay this penalty. The word: الدوائر (*al-dawā'ir*: the cycles of time) is the plural of: دائرة (*dā'irah*). According to the Arabic lexicon, *dā'irah* is the changed state that shifts away from the good state into a bad one. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān says in response to them: عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ (upon them is the evil cycle). In other words, the evil state of affairs they wish would strike at Muslims is going to descend upon them all right – and, because their words and deeds are such, they will find themselves far more disgraced.

After having described the state of affairs prevailing among hypocrites of distant deserts, it was considered appropriate that the true and staunch Muslims from among the same stock of Bedouins should also be mentioned. This was done in verse 99 – very much in line with the typical style of the Qur'ān – so that, it stands established that Bedouins too are not all alike. Among them, there are many sincere Muslims, and people of sense and discernment as well. Their style of life is different. When they give in obligatory alms (Zakāh) or in voluntary charities (Ṣadaqāt), they regard these as a source of nearness to Allah Ta'ālā and hope that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would be praying for them.

That Ṣadaqāt are a source of nearness to Allah Ta'ālā is obvious. However, the hope of prayers from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is on a different basis. It should be borne in mind that the Holy Qur'ān – wherever it has asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to collect Zakāh on the wealth and property of Muslims – has also directed him that he should also pray for those who pay Zakāh. The forthcoming verse (103):

حُذِّ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةٌ تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلَّ عَلَيْهِمْ (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] through which you may cleanse and purify them, and pray for them) is a good example? The instruction to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should pray for these people has been termed: وصل (and pray for them) using the word: صلاة (*ṣalāt*) for it. Therefore, in the present verse as well, the sense of the prayers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been expressed by the use of the word: صلاة (*ṣalāt*).

Verse 100

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ
بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

As for the first and foremost of the Emigrants and the Supporters and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live for ever. That is the supreme success. [100]

Commentary

The verse before this (99) carried a description of sincere and true Muslims among the Bedouins of the desert. The present verse mentions all sincere and true Muslims along with their relative degrees of excellence.

Let us begin with the opening statement: السَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ (the first and foremost of the Emigrants and the Supporters). Most commentators have taken the preposition من (*min*) for *tab'īd* which denotes a part of something and may be translated as 'out of') and thus have set up two categories of the noble Ṣaḥābah from among the Emigrants (*al-muhājirīn*) and the Supporters (*al-anṣār*) – (1) 'the first and foremost,' then, (2) the rest of them.

This interpretation implies that it is only first category that is referred to in the above verse, i.e. 'the first and foremost'. Then, for identifying 'the first and foremost' the commentators have different views. Some consider 'the first and foremost' from among the noble Companions to be those who have offered their Ṣalāh by turning to both the Qiblahs, that is, those who had embraced Islām before the change of Qi-

blah were 'the first and foremost.' This is the view of Sa'īd ibn al-musayyab and Qatādah. 'Atā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ has said that 'the first and foremost' are the Ṣaḥābah who participated in the battle of Badr. Sha'bī said that the Ṣaḥābah who were a party to the Bai'atur-Riḍwān (the pledge taken at the time of the expedition of Ḥudaibiyah) are 'the first and foremost.' And according to each view, after respective 'first and foremost,' the rest of the Ṣaḥābah – *muhājir* (emigrant) or *anṣār* (supporter) – are in the second category. (Maḥzarī, Qurṭubī)

All these views were based on the interpretation that takes the preposition من (*min*) in this verse for *tab'īd* as aforesaid. Tafsīr Maḥzarī has however, reported another interpretation. According to this interpretation, the preposition من (*min*) is not for *tab'īd* here. It is rather for *bayan* which explains the preceding words and stands for 'that is'. The translation of the verse, in this case, would be as follows: "As for the first and the foremost people, that is, all the Emigrants (the Muhājirīn) and the supporters (the Anṣār)..." The sentence thus will mean that all the *muhājirīn* and the Anṣār are the first and foremost as compared to the rest of the Muslim community.

To sum up, in accordance with the first Tafsīr, there are two categories of Ṣaḥābah, being that of 'the first and foremost' and that of those who embraced Islām after the change of Qiblah or the battle of Badr or the Bai'atur-Riḍwān. The substance of the last Tafsīr is that the noble Ṣaḥābah, all of them, are but 'the first and the foremost' – because, their 'Imān (faith) is first and foremost as compared to that of the rest of the Muslim Ummah.

The second sentence of the verse: وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ has been translated as 'and those who followed them in goodness.' It means Muslims who followed the footsteps of 'the first and foremost' precisely and perfectly in all fields of deeds and morals. According to the first Tafsīr of the first sentence, the first category belongs to those Emigrants and Supporters among Ṣaḥābah who embraced Islām after the change of Qiblah or the battle of Badr or the Bai'at of Ḥudaibiyah. After them, all Muslims fall in the second category, Muslims who followed the model set by the noble Ṣaḥābah in all matters of faith, deeds and morals honestly and staunchly right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah.

And according to the other Tafsīr, the expression: وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا those who followed them) includes great people who came after the noble Ṣaḥā-

All the Şahābah are the people of Jannah and are blessed with the pleasure of Allah

After reporting this statement, the author of Tafsīr Maḥzarī has said, ‘in my view, the following verse carries a more solid proof of the fact that all revered Ṣaḥābah belong to Jannah : لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْإِذْنِ أَوْ لِكُلِّ فِتْنَةٍ قَتِلَ أُولَئِكَ أَكْثَرُ وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ. It has been fully and clearly stated in this verse that all revered Ṣaḥābah, first or the last, have been promised *al-husnā*, that is, Jannah or Paradise.’

And in Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said, ‘the fire of Jahannam (hell) cannot touch the Muslim who has seen me or has seen those who have seen me,’ (Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه)

People who criticize some revered Ṣaḥābah on the basis of what transpired during their mutual controversies with the aim of sowing seeds of suspicion and discord in the hearts of those who hold them in esteem are really treading a dangerous course. We seek the protection of Allah against it.

Verse 101

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُم مِّنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنْفِقُونَ ۖ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ مَرَدُّوا
عَلَى النِّفَاقِ ۚ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ ۖ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ۖ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ
يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

And among those Bedouins who are around you there are hypocrites, and among the people of Madīnah as well. They are adamant in hypocrisy. You do not know them. We know them. We shall punish them twice, then they shall be driven to a great punishment. [101]

Commentary

Mentioned in several previous verses there are hypocrites whose hypocrisy stood exposed through their words and deeds, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did realize that they were hypocrites. Mentioned in the present verse appearing above there are hypocrites whose hypocrisy was so perfect in its camouflage that it remained hidden from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم until then. In this verse, two Divine punishments to come much before 'Ākhirah upon such diehard hypocrites have been mentioned. In the first instance, right here in this world, they are consumed by the concern to hide their hypocrisy and the fear that it may be exposed. Then, no less a punishment is their being under compulsion to respect and follow Islām and Muslims, at least outwardly, despite their extreme malice and hostility for them. And then, there is the other punishment, the punishment of the grave and the punishment of Barzakh (the post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) that will reach them well before Qiyāmah (doomsday) and 'Ākhirah (Hereafter).

Verses 102 - 106

وَاخْرُؤْنَ اعْتَزَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا ۚ
عَسَى اللَّهُ أَن يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾ خُذْ
مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ إِنَّ
صَلَوَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَّهُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾ أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ
اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ
هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَقُلْ اْعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ

وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَسَتَرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ
فَيَنْسِفُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَأَخْرَجُونَ مُرْجُونَ لَأَمْرِ اللَّهِ
إِمَّا يُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَإِمَّا يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾

And there are others who admitted their sins while they had mixed a good deed with another that was evil. It is likely that Allah will relent towards them. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [102]

Take out of their wealth a *Ṣadaqah* (obligatory alms) through which you may cleanse and purify them. Surely, your prayer is peace for them. And Allah is (All-) Hearing, (All-) Knowing. [103]

Have they not come to know that Allah is He who accepts repentance from His slaves and takes the *Ṣadaqāt*, and that Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. [104]

And say, "Do (what you do) Allah will see your deed, as will the Messenger and the believers." And you shall be returned to the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen, then He will tell you what you have been doing. [105]

And there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah (comes): either He punishes them or relents towards them. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.

[106]

Commentary

When Muslims were given a general call for Jihād at Tabūk, the weather was extremely hot. The journey was long and they were supposed to be up against the trained army of a big state, the first such episode in Islāmic history. These were some of the causes why people split into different groups.

The first group was that of sincere Muslims who got ready for Jihād without any hesitation at the very first call. Another group first hesitated initially, then joined in. They are the ones mentioned in: الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ (who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked – 9:117).

The third group was that of people who were genuinely handicapped because of which they could not go. They have been mentioned

in : كَيْسَ عَلَى الضَّعَفَاءِ : (There is no blame on the weak – 9:91). The fourth group belonged to sincere Muslims who had no excuse yet they did not take part in the Jihād because of laziness. They have been mentioned in وَالْآخَرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا (And there are others who admitted – 9:102) and الْآخَرُونَ مُرْجَوْنَ (And there are others whose matter is deferred – 9:106) under study now. The fifth group was that of hypocrites who did not participate in the Jihād because of hypocrisy. They have been mentioned at several places in the previous verses. In short, the fifth group of hypocrites featured mostly in previous verses while the present verse (102) mentions people in the fourth group, that is, those who, despite being true Muslims, did not participate in the Jihād because of laziness.

It was said in the first verse (102) that some had admitted their sins. Their deeds were mixed. Some of their deeds were good while some others were bad. For them, there was hope that Allah Ta‘ālā may accept their repentance. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه said, ‘Ten persons did not go for the battle of Tabūk. They had no valid excuse for it. Later, they were sorry for what they had done. Seven of them tied themselves up to the pillars of the Mosque of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم resolving that they would continue to remain tied as they were like prisoners until the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were to accept their repentance and untie them. All narratives of the incident agree that Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضى الله عنه was one of them. As for other names, narratives differ.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saw them so tied up and he was told that they had resolved to remain tied until the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم unties them, he said, ‘By Allah, I too shall not untie them until Allah Ta‘ālā orders me to do that. The crime is serious.’ Thereupon, this verse (102) was revealed and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered that they be untied. They were. (Qurṭubī)

According to a narrative of Sa‘īd ibn al-Musaiyyab, when people went to untie Sayyidnā Abū Lubābah رضى الله عنه, he refused and said, ‘I shall remain tied until the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم does not, with his pleasure, untie me with his own blessed hands.’ So, when he came for the Fajr Ṣalāh, he himself untied him.

What were these mixed deeds?

It has been said in the verse that they had mixed a good deed with another that was evil. Obvious among the good ones were ‘Īmān, Ṣalāh,

and Fasting. Then, they had participated in earlier battles with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. And then, following this battle of Tabūk in which they could not participate, they had admitted their misconduct, were ashamed of it and had repented. As for the evil ones, they had not participated in the battle of Tabūk and thus they had acted in a manner that resembled the approach of the hypocrites.

Mixed Deeds of all the Muslims are governed by the same rule

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī that this verse though revealed about a particular group, is universal in its application and the injunction it carries is valid until the day of Qiyāmah. It covers Muslims whose deeds are a mixture of the good and the bad. If they were to repent from their sins, it can be hoped that they shall be pardoned and forgiven.

Abū ‘Uthmān رضى الله عنه has said, ‘this verse of the Holy Qur’ān brings great hope for this *ummah*.’ A detailed Ḥadīth relating to the Ascension of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Samurah ibn Jundub رضى الله عنه says, ‘On the seventh heaven, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم met with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, he saw some people with him whose faces were bright. And some of them had some spots and stains on their faces. When these people went into a stream and came out all washed up, their faces had also turned bright. The Archangel Jibra’īl told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that these people with bright faces you saw first were those who had professed faith and then kept clean from sins: الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ (those who have believed and have not mixed their faith with injustice – 6:82). The others were people who did what was a mixture of good and evil, but repented later. Allah accepted their repentance and their sins were forgiven.’ (Qurtubī)

The imperative: خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً : “Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah (obligatory alms)” in the second verse (103) has its background. Some people, as mentioned a little earlier, had stayed back from the battle of Tabūk without a valid excuse. Then, out of remorse, they had tied themselves to the pillars of the Mosque. Then came the acceptance of their repentance as revealed in the previous verse (102) and they were released from their self-imprisonment. When this happened, they presented their entire wealth as a token of their gratitude so that it could

be given out as *Ṣadaqah*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم refused to accept it by saying that he did not have the authority to take it. Thereupon, this verse (103): *خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ* (Take out of their wealth a *Ṣadaqah*) was revealed and he accepted to take one third of it as *Ṣadaqah*. He did not take the entire wealth, rather, took a part of it – as indicated in the verse. The preposition *من* (*min*: out of) proves it.

Collection and disbursement of Zakāh is the responsibility of an Islamic State

Though, according to the background of the revelation, the collection of *Ṣadaqah* was to be made from a particular group of people but, the words being general, they have universal application.

This is the view preferred in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, Aḥkām al-Qurʾān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Tafsīr Maḥḥarī and others. Al-Qurṭubī and Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has gone on to further explain it. According to them, even if the same particular event is taken to be the cause of the revelation in this verse, still then, in terms of the Qurʾānic principle, this injunction shall remain general – and shall remain binding on Muslims right through the day of Qiyāmah. The reason is that most of the injunctions of the Holy Qurʾān were revealed in the background of one or the other particular event, but nobody has ever held that their application remains restricted to that particular event. In fact, unless there is a certain proof of its particularization, that injunction is invariably regarded as universally applicable to all Muslims.

On the basis of the same principle, the entire Muslim *ummah* agrees that, though the address in this verse is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, yet this injunction is neither restricted to him, nor to his period of time. Instead of that, every such person who will succeed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as the Amīr of Muslims shall be the addressee of this injunction, and the assignee to carry it out. It will be one of his duties that he administers the collection of Zakāh and *Ṣadaqāt* paid by Muslims and ensures that these are disbursed on authorized heads.

Even in the event of Jihād declared against those who refused to pay Zakāh during the initial stage of the Caliphate of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, there were some non-payers of Zakāh who had openly rebelled against Islām and had turned apostates. Then, there were

some others who called themselves Muslims and did not refuse that Zakāh was a religious obligation, but the excuse they made for not paying Zakāh was that the authority given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ to collect Zakāh from them was valid during the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ only, and they kept paying Zakāh that time. Now, after he has passed away, they questioned, what right did Abū Bakr have to demand Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt from them? In the beginning, Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه hesitated about waging Jihād against them for the reason that they were after all Muslims who wanted to avoid paying Zakāh under the cover of a verse of the Qur’ān – therefore, they should not be treated in the manner usual apostates are treated. But, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه had reached an irrevocable decision. He said, ‘we shall wage Jihād against anyone who will differentiate between Ṣalāh and Zakāh.’

This gave a clear hint. Today people say that the injunction of Zakāh is particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that it stands dropped after his demise. Tomorrow they may say that Ṣalāh too was particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ – because, a verse of the Qur’ān reads: **أَمِ الصَّلَاةَ** **يَذْكُرُ الشَّمْسِ** (Establish prayer at the decline of the sun – 17:78) where the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the addressee. But, the injunction of the verse of prayer is universal. It applies to the entire Muslim *ummah*. So, this verse cannot save those who wrongly interpret it as being particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ from becoming *kāfirs*. Similarly, this interpretation in the verse: **خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ** (Take out of their wealth a Ṣadaqah) will not save them from *kufr* and apostasy. Thereupon, Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه was also satisfied and it was with the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah that Jihād was launched against them.

Zakāh is ‘Ibādah, not a government tax

In the statement: **خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ** (Take out of their wealth) appearing soon after: **صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا** (a Ṣadaqah [obligatory alms] through which you may cleanse and purify them) in verse 103 of the Holy Qur’ān, there is a clear hint that Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt are not like taxes that governments collect to run the system. The truth of the matter is that their purpose is to cleanse the men of wealth themselves from sins.

At this point, it should be noted that the collection of Zakāh and Ṣadaqāt yields two benefits. The first benefit is received by the owner of the wealth himself through which he comes out clean from sins and

from the germs of moral diseases that are generated by the greed for wealth. As for the other benefit, it provides support for the weaker components of the society, people who are incapable of finding what they need to eke out an existence. Orphaned children, widows, crippled and handicapped men and women, common people who are poor and needy are obvious examples.

But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has told us about the first benefit only. Thus, by confining itself in that manner, it has also given the indication that the first benefit is what happens to be the real objective of *Zakāh* and *Ṣadaqāt*. The second benefit comes as a corollary. Therefore, in the event there is no orphan, widow, or a poor or needy person present at any place or time, still then, the injunction of *Zakāh* as applicable to the wealthy will not stand dropped.

What has been stated here has its support in the practice of past communities. When some part of wealth or property was set aside for Allah, its use became impermissible for everyone. Rather, according to the custom, this offering was put at some detached place where came a lightning from the heavens and burnt it up. This was a sign that Allah Ta'ālā has accepted the *Ṣadaqah*. When this heavenly fire did not come, it was supposed to be a sign of the *Ṣadaqah* remaining unacceptable. Nobody would then touch this ill-omened property.

This makes it clear that the legal enforcement of *Zakāh* and *Ṣadaqāt* is not exclusively designed to alleviate the suffering of needy people. In fact, it is a financial obligation and an act of *'Ibādah* – very similar to praying and fasting that are acts of physical *'Ibādah*. This is one of the distinctions of the blessed community of Muslims that their poor and needy have been allowed to use wealth set aside in the way of Allah. A Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth from Muslim reports its confirmation from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

A question and its answer

A question arises here – when the repentance of these gentlemen was accepted following the event mentioned above, it stands established that sins were forgiven and purification was accomplished through the very act of repentance. What then, would be the sense of declaring that a portion from their wealth was being taken to purify them?

The answer is that the sin has, no doubt, been forgiven by virtue of the repentance, but it is quite possible that it may have left behind some residual effects following the forgiveness of sin which could become the cause of falling into sin. *Ṣadaqah* removes such residual effects and makes purification perfect.

The word: *صلوة* (*ṣalāh*) used in the expression: *وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ* (and pray for them – 103) means praying for Allah's mercy. This corresponds to what has been reported from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم – that he prayed for some people by using this very word: *ṣalāh*, for example: *اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى آلِ أَبِي أَوْفَى* (O Allah, bless the family of Abū Awfā) as is reported in a Ḥadīth. But, later on the use of the word: *ṣalāt* became special to prophets, may peace be upon them. Therefore, Muslim jurists say that now one should not pray for anyone using the word: *ṣalāh*. Instead, the use of this word should be limited to prophets to avoid any ambiguousness or doubt.¹ (Bayān al-Qur'ān etc.)

Here we see that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to pray for those who give *Ṣadaqah*. On this basis, some Muslim jurists rule that it is *wājib* (obligatory, necessary) for the Muslim head of the state (Imām, 'Amīr) to pray for those who give *Ṣadaqah*. However, there are others who take this command to be of a recommendatory nature (*mustaḥabb*: recommended). (Qurtubī)

Let us now turn to the statement: *وَالْآخَرُونَ مَرْجُُونَ لِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ* (And there are others whose matter is deferred till the command of Allah – 106). We already know that seven of the ten believers, who had missed the battle of Tabūk without a valid excuse, had demonstrated their heart-felt remorse by tying themselves up to the pillars of the Prophet's Mosque. The injunction which covers them appeared in the first verse (102): *الْآخَرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ* (And there are others who admitted their sins). Verse 106 is now referring to the other three gentlemen who had not done what the group of seven had done in the *Masjid*. Thus, they had not admitted their misconduct openly. In their case, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered his Companions to see that Muslims boycott them by not talking to them. When things reached those limits, they learnt their les-

1. However, it is permissible to use this word for others in conjunction with a prophet. It is therefore allowed to say, *اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَآصْحَابِهِ* (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

son, confessed to their misconduct and repented sincerely, following which orders were given for their pardon. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

Verses 107 - 110

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَارْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ إِنْ
أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ لَا تَقُمْ
فِيهِ أَبَدًا لِّمَسْجِدٍ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ
تَقُومَ فِيهِ فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ
الْمُطَهَّرِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَى تَقْوَىٰ مِنَ اللَّهِ
وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَى شَفَا جُرْفٍ هَارٍ فَأَنهَارَ
بِهِ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾
لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِي بَنَوْا رِيبَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَقَطَّعَ
قُلُوبُهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

And (there are) those who have built a mosque to cause mischief and infidelity and to create dissention among the believers and to make preparations for one who has been at war with Allah and His Messenger even before. And they will certainly swear (and say), "We intended nothing but good." And Allah testifies that they are liars. [107]

Do not ever stand there (in prayer). In fact, the mosque that was founded on *Taqwā* (piety) from the very first day is more-worthy that you stand there. In it there are people who like to observe purity; and Allah loves those observing purity. [108]

Is, then, a person who has founded his building on fear from Allah and His pleasure better or the one who has founded his building on the edge of an abyss about to collapse, so it did collapse with him into the fire of Jannaham? And Allah does not give guidance to the unjust people. [109]

The building they have made shall always remain a

source of doubt in their hearts unless their hearts are cut into pieces. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. [110]

Commentary

Anti-Islām activities of hypocrites have been described in several previous verses. The present verses mention yet another conspiracy hatched by them. It has been reported that there was a man in Madīnah. His name was Abū 'Āmir. He had become a Christian during the days of Jāhiliyyah and was known as Abū 'Āmir the Rāhib (that is, a monk). This is the same Abū 'Āmir whose son Hanẓalah رضى الله عنه is a well-known Ṣaḥābī whose dead body was washed by angels and which gave him the sobriquet of 'the one who was bathed by angels.' But, the father stuck by his error and remained a Christian.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came to Madīnah, Abū 'Āmir the Rāhib visited him and criticized Islām. Even the answers given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not satisfy this unfortunate man. In fact, he said, 'may the liar between the two of us be cursed and die in travel far away from friends and relatives.' He also said, 'I shall be there to help any aggressor against you.' And so he did. He fought on the side of the enemies of Muslims in all battles right through the battle of Ḥunain. When the big and strong tribe of Hawāzin too was defeated, he lost hope. He ran away to Syria, the stronghold of Christians where he died far away from his friends and relatives. The prayer he had made was before him. When disgrace is destined for someone, this is how he acts. His own prayer brought that disgrace upon him.

But, as long as he lived, he remained busy hatching conspiracies against Islām and Muslims. He virtually tried to induce the Byzantine ruler to attack Madīnah and expel Muslims from there.

One aspect of this conspiracy materialized when he wrote a letter to the hypocrites of Madīnah with whom he had a sinister understanding. He told them that he was working on the Byzantine ruler to attack Madīnah. But, it was necessary to have group strength to lend local support to the invader. For this purpose, he suggested that they should make a building right there in Madīnah giving people the impression that they were building a mosque so that Muslims do not get to be suspicious. After that, they should get their men together in this place and collect as much of weapons and supplies as they could. He

wanted this to become an undercover center where his accomplices would be conducting their activities against Muslims by mutual consultation.

It was on his suggestion that twelve hypocrites got together in Qubā', a locality of Madīnah where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had first stayed during his *hijrah* and where he had built a *masjid*. They chose the same place to lay the foundation of another '*masjid*.' Ibn Ishāq and others have also reported the names of these hypocrites. Then, to keep Muslims under deception, the hypocrites made a plan that they would have the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم lead a Ṣalāh in congregation at their so-called *masjid* so that all Muslims are convinced that this new place was also a *masjid* very much like the one built there earlier.

A delegation from them came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They pleaded that the existing Masjid of Qubā' was far away. It was difficult for old and sick people to reach there. Moreover, they argued, the Masjid of Qubā' itself was not spacious enough to accommodate all residents of the locality. Therefore, they claimed, they had founded another *masjid* for that purpose so that older Muslims may benefit by it. Finally, (releasing their punch line) they said, 'please lead a Ṣalāh in this '*masjid*' so that it stands blessed!'

That was a time when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was getting ready for the battle of Tabūk. He told them that he would be unable to do that as he was about to leave the city but he promised that he would pray there when he returned.

However, on his return from the battle of Tabūk, when he camped at a place close to Madīnah, the verses cited above were revealed to him which had exposed the conspiracy of these hypocrites. After the revelation of these verses, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered some of his Companions, 'Āmir ibn Sakan, Waḥshī, the killer of Ḥamzah and others, to go, demolish and burn the structure (of the ill-intentioned '*masjid*'). So these gentlemen took off, carried out the orders and the structure was leveled flat on the ground. (This event has been abridged from narratives reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maḏharī.)

Quoting Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Ṣāliḥī, Tafsīr Maḏharī also reports that the site of Masjid Dīrār was still lying vacant at the time the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had reached and settled in Madīnah. When he allowed 'Āsim ibn 'Adiyy to build his house on that site, he submitted, 'yā rasūlallāh, I do not like to build a house on a cursed site about which these verses of the Qur'ān have been revealed. Nevertheless, Thābit ibn Aqram is really in need of a house for he has none. Please allow him to make a house here.' So, going along with his suggestion, he gave this plot of land to Thābit ibn Aqram. But, as fate would have it, since the time Sayyidnā Thābit رضى الله عنه came to live in the house he made there, he either had no child or if he did, the child did not live.

Historians have added that this place was cursed not only for human beings but also for domestic birds and animals that could not survive with their normal way of living. Thus, after that time, this place lies desolate at some distance from the well-known Masjid Qubā'.

After having gone through the details of the event, let us now turn to the text of the cited verses. It was said in the first verse (107): وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا (And [there are] those who have built a mosque) to bring harm upon Muslims.

This verse points out to three motives behind the making of this 'masjid':

1. The first one is: ضَرَارًا (*dirāran*: to cause harm to Muslims). The words 'ضرار': *dirār*' and 'ضرر': *ḍarar*' are both used in the Arabic language to carry the sense of causing harm. As for difference between the two, it has been said that '*ḍarar*' is a harm that brings gain for the person harming but causes loss for the harmed. And '*dirār*' is the inflicting of a loss upon other people while it brings just no gain for the person inflicting it. Since, this was going to be the fate of this '*masjid*' – that its founders gain nothing out of it – therefore, the word '*dirar*' was used here.

2. The second motive reads: تَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (to cause dissention among the believers). It means that, by setting up this '*masjid*', they looked forward to creating a division among the community of Muslims. They hoped to wean out a group that would be offering Ṣalāh in their '*masjid*' as a sort of separate entity. Then, it may have also resulted in reducing the number of Muslims going for their prayers to the old Masjid Qubā'.

3. The third motive was spelt out as: إِزْهَادًا لِلْآخِرَةِ (i.e. to provide a

sanctuary to enemies of Allah and His Messenger and a forum to conspire against Muslims.

This presentation as a whole proves that the '*masjid*' which was declared to be a 'harmful mosque' (Masjid Dīrār) by the Holy Qur'ān, and which was demolished and burnt down under the orders of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, was no *masjid* in the real sense. Nor was it intended to be a place where people could pray. The three objectives behind it have been mentioned immediately above. From here we learn the rules that should be followed in our time. Today, may be some Muslims were to make a *masjid* close to and in competition of another Masjid, while their purpose is nothing but the same mutual discord, the same old effort to split up the congregation of the first *masjid*, or any other evil interest of this nature. If so, the maker of such a *masjid* will deserve no reward from Allah. Rather, he would be a sinner because of having created dissention between Muslims – but, despite all this, that place shall be called a *masjid* in terms of Islāmic law, and the etiquette and rules relating to mosques shall apply to it. Demolishing it or putting it on fire shall not be permissible. And the Ṣalāh of those who pray in it will also be valid – though, doing so shall continue to be a sin in itself.

From here we also learn about another rule relevant in contemporary setting. If a Muslim makes a *masjid* in that manner, either to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the maker will, though, not get the reward of making a *masjid*, instead, will incur a sin, yet it will not be what Masjid Dīrār is in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, that is, it will not be called by that name. When some people notice a *masjid* like that, they would say that it was Masjid Dīrār. This is not correct. However, one could say that it was like Masjid Dirar. Therefore, its building can also be stayed – as done by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه through a court order where he had instructed that another *masjid* should not be made close to the one already there lest the congregation and flourish of the first *masjid* is affected adversely. (Tafsīr Kashshaf)

About this Masjid Dīrār, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been given the order: لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا: 'Do not ever stand there (in prayer) – 108.' The word '*qiyām*' in the text denotes standing for prayer. The sense is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should never go in to offer his

prayers in a mosque by that name.

Ruling:

What it tells us is: If, even today, a new *masjid* is made adjacent to the one already there unnecessarily, just to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the better choice is not to offer prayers therein – though, Ṣalāh remains valid.

In the same verse (108), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also been told that it is correct for him to pray in the particular *masjid* the foundation of which has been laid on *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) from day one. And then, the people who offer their Ṣalāh in it love to observe full precaution in remaining cleansed and pure (of all physical and spiritual impurities) – for Allah too likes such meticulous observers of self-purity.

The context of the verse shows what is being referred to here is Masjid Qubā' where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to say his prayers at that time. There are some Ḥadīth narratives that also support this view. (As reported by Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn 'Abbās, by 'Āmr ibn Shai-bah from Sahl al-Anṣārī and by Ibn Khuzaimah in his Ṣaḥīḥ from 'Uwaimir ibn Sā'idah – with reference to Maẓharī)

As for the reports which say that it refers to the Prophet's Mosque, they do not contradict it. The reason is that the foundation of the Mosque of the Prophet was laid in accordance with a revealed command by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with his blessed hands. It goes without saying that its foundation rests on *Taqwā*, that is, on purity, piety and fear of Allah. And who else could be more purified than the noble messenger of Allah? Therefore, that too is a *masjid* founded on *taqwā*. (As reported by Tirmidhī on sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه with the chain of narrators ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ – from Qurṭubī)

At the end of the verse (108), it was said: فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا (In it there are people who like to observe purity). In this verse, the *masjid* declared worthier for the prayers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the one the foundation of which was laid on *Taqwā* from day one. Thus, both Masjid Qubā' and the Mosque of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are included in the sense of the verse. Also pointed to in this verse there is yet another merit of this *masjid* – that those who prayed in

this *masjid* were a kind of people who did their best to remain cleansed and pure. The word for purity used in the text is *Tahārah*. The sense of *Tahārah* at this place includes purity from common filth and impurities, as well as purity from sins and bad morals. Those who offered their prayers in Masjid Quba' and the Prophet's Mosque were generally equipped with all these virtues.

Special Note

From here we also come to know that the merit or superiority of a *masjid* really depends on the fact that it should have been made with absolute sincerity for the sake of Allah. And to put it conversely, there should not be any trace of duplicity, any motive to earn name, fame and recognition, or any other false and corrupting interest involved in its making. Then, we also learn that the quality of those who pray in a *masjid* is significant. If they are good, righteous, knowledgeable about their religion ('Ālim) and are devoted to the worship of Allah ('Ābid), the superiority of the *masjid* increases. Offering prayers in a *masjid* frequented by such God-fearing people is more merit worthy.

In the third (109) and the fourth (110) verses, Masjid Dirār (the harmful mosque) made by the hypocrites has been condemned as it has to be when compared with a *masjid* that is blessed. This has been accomplished through the use of a similitude. The surface of the land on which they were laying the foundation of their '*masjid*' has been likened to a landmass that has been corroded on the inside by flowing water. The topsoil looks solid and smooth. Now, if someone starts building there, it is obvious that the whole thing would collapse instantly. Similarly, the foundation of this Masjid Dirār was inherently unstable. The result was that it collapsed and went right into the fire of Jahannam. The expression 'collapsed into the fire of Jahannam' could be figurative in its sense – in that it smoothed out the way of Jahannam for its makers. Some others have taken it in the real sense – in that the *masjid*, when made to collapse, went into the Jahannam. Allah knows best.

Then, in the last verse (110), it was said that this building would always keep increasing the doubt and hypocrisy in their hearts unless their hearts are shredded into pieces. The sense is that their doubt, hypocrisy, envy and chagrin would go on increasing right to the end of their life.

Verses 111 - 112

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ
 الْجَنَّةُ ۖ يَفَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۖ وَعْدًا
 عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ
 مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بَبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
 الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١١١﴾ اتَّابِعُونَ الْعَبِيدُونَ الْحَمِيدُونَ السَّابِحُونَ
 الرُّكَّعُونَ الشُّجْدُونَ الْأَمْرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
 وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against (a promise) that Paradise shall be for them. They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed – a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injil and the Qur'an. And who can fulfill his covenant more than Allah? So, rejoice in the deal you have made, and that is the great achievement. [111]

(They are) those who repent, those who worship, those who praise (Allah), those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair and those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah. And give the good news to the believers. [112]

Commentary

Sequence

Previous verses carried a condemnation of those staying behind without a valid excuse and missing the Jihād. The present verses take up the merit of *mujāhidīn*.

The background of revelation

As explained by the majority of commentators, these verses were revealed about the participants of Bai'at al-'Aqabah (the pledge of allegiance to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at al-'Aqabah) which was taken from the Anṣār of Madīnah before Hijrah in 'Makkah al-Mukarramah. Therefore, despite that the entire Sūrah is Madanī,

these verses have been termed as Makkī.

‘Al-‘Aqabah’ is part of a mountain. Here, it refers to the ‘Aqabah that forms a part of the mountain along the Jamratu al-‘Aqabah (the stone pillar of ‘Aqabah) in Minā. (In our time, due to the increased number of Ḥujjāj [Hajj pilgrims], this part of the mountain has been leveled to form a smooth surface with the only exception of Jamarah [the stone pillar] which still stands there). It is on this ‘Aqabah that a pledge of allegiance بَيْعَة (*bai‘ah*) was taken from the people of Madīnah thrice. The first pledge came in the eleventh year of the Prophet’s advent. Six persons embraced Islām, gave the pledge and returned to Madīnah. When they arrived there, Islām and the Prophet of Islām became the talk of the town. Next year, it was during the Ḥajj season that twelve people assembled at the same place. Out of these, five had taken part in the first pledge while the other seven were new. All of them took the pledge. By that time, the number of Muslims in Madīnah had increased to more than forty. They requested that someone should be sent to teach Qur’ān to them. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā Muṣ‘ab ibn ‘Umair رضى الله عنه. He taught Qur’ān to Muslims present there as well as conveyed the message of Islām around, as a result of which major groups of people in Madīnah entered the fold of Islām.

After that, in the thirteenth year of the Prophet’s advent, seventy men and women assembled at the same place. This is the third Bai‘atu al-‘Aqabah – and the last. Generally, when reference is made to Bai‘atu al-‘Aqabah, it means this very Bai‘ah (pledge of allegiance). This pledge made it binding on participants that they would uphold the basic beliefs (*‘aqā'id*) and deeds (*‘a’māl*) of Islām, and would particularly be ready to take part in Jihād against the disbelievers, and protect and support the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he migrates and reaches Madīnah. In this connection, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah رضى الله عنه submitted, *‘yā rasūlallāh*, a compact is being made at this time. If there are any conditions regarding your Lord or regarding yourself, let these be mentioned there clearly.’ He said, ‘As for Allah Ta‘ālā, I lay down the condition that all of you shall worship Him – and worship none but Him. As for myself, the condition is that you shall protect me as you protect your own lives, wealth, property and children.’ They asked, ‘if we fulfill these two conditions, what shall we

get in return?' He said, 'you will get Jannah.' All in delight, they said, 'we are pleased with this deal, so pleased that we shall never request on our own that it be cancelled nor shall we like it to be cancelled.

At this place, since the pledge took the apparent form of a transaction of give and take, this verse (111) was revealed in the terminology of a business deal: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ** (Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them). After hearing this verse, Sayyidnā Bara' ibn Ma'rūr, Abū al-Haitham and As'ad رضى الله عنهم اجمعين were the first ones who placed their hands on the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They were promising in effect that they were readily agreeable to this deal and they would protect the Holy Prophet ﷺ as they protected their family and would stand by him to face any challenge, even if it came from the combined forces of the blacks and whites on this Earth.

This is the very first verse of Jihād

Injunctions of Jihād did not exist during the early Makkan period. This is first verse about fighting and killing which was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah itself, though its implementation began after Hijrah. After that, came another verse: **أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ** (Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought against – al-Hajj 22:39). When this Bai'atu al-'Aqabah (pledge of 'Aqabah) was concluded in secret from the disbelievers of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered his noble Companions to migrate from Makkah to Madi-nah. Groups of them started migrating gradually. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم remained behind waiting for the permission from Allah Ta'ālā. When Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه decided to migrate, he held him back so that he could accompany him. (This whole event has been described in Tafsīr Mazharī with relevant references)

We can now move to the second sentence of the verse (111): **يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ** (They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed ... a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injīl and the Qur'ān). This verse tells us that fighting in the way of Allah was a commandment also revealed for past communities in their Scriptures. As for the popular assumption that there is no injunction of Jihād in the Injīl, it is possible that, as part of the changes made by people who came later, the injunctions of Jihād were ex-

punged. Allah knows best.

At the end of the verse (111), it was said: **فَاسْتَبِشْرُوا بِبَيْعِكُمْ** (So, rejoice in the deal you have made). The agreement arrived at with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this event of the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah had, on the surface, turned into a sort of buying and selling deal. Therefore, it was expressed through the word: **شراء** (Allah has bought) at the beginning of the verse. In the present sentence, Muslims were told that they had struck a good deal which will bring blessings for them. The reason was that they had tendered their life and wealth that were mortal while that which they received in return was eternal. If we come to think about it, we would realize that wealth was the only thing they spent out. As for life, that is, the essential spirit, that will remain even after death, and remain forever. And if we were to look deeper into the reality of wealth, that too happens to be nothing but the gift of Allah Almighty. When born, human beings visit the world empty-handed. It was He who made them own everything around them and it was He who made His own gift the price of eternal blessings and gave them Paradise. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said, 'this is a strange deal where the commodity and the price have both been given to you!'

The sage, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, 'Behold, what a profitable business is this that Allah has thrown open to every believer!' And he also said, 'It is Allah who has blessed you with wealth and property. Spend a little out of it and buy Paradise.' (Maḥzarī)

The last verse (112) which begins with the words: **الَّذِينَ انَابُوا** '(They are) those who repent, those who worship...) describes the attributes of the same believers about whom it was said earlier that Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them. Though, the verse was revealed as relating to a particular group of participants in the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah, but the sense of the verse covers all *mujāhidīn* in the way of Allah. As for the list of their attributes which opens with: **الَّذِينَ انَابُوا** (those who repent), they are not there as a condition, because the promise of Paradise has been made for Jihād in the way of Allah, in an absolute sense. The purpose behind the delineation of these attributes is to stress that those who deserve Paradise do have such attributes – as was specially the case with the noble Companions who were a party to Bai'atu al-'Aqabah.

The word: **السَّائِحُونَ** (*as-sā'ihūn*: translated literally as 'those who jour-

ney'), according to the majority of commentators, means those who fast (*ṣā'imūn*). Actually, this word has been derived from: *سِيَاحَة* (*siyāḥah*: journey, pilgrimage). Before Islām, *siyāḥah* was taken to be an act of worship in the Christian religion that meant leaving home for the sake of worship. Islām declared it to be monasticism, and prohibited it. It was replaced with fasting as an act of worship. The reason is that *siyāḥah* taught disengagement from worldly life while fasting taught that one should abstain from worldly desires for a limited period of time living at home. It is on the same basis that Jihād too has been equated with *siyāḥah* in some reports. Ibn Mājah, Ḥākim and Baihaqī have authentically reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: *سِيَاحَةُ أُمَّتِي الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* (The *siyāḥah* of my ummah is Jihād in the way of Allah).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that *سَائِحِينَ* (*sā'iḥīn*: those who journey) in the Qur'an means: *صَائِمِينَ* (*ṣā'imīn*: those who fast). Explaining *سَائِحِينَ* (*as-sā'iḥīn*: those who journey), 'Ikrimah said, 'they are students who leave their homes to seek religious knowledge.' (Mazharī)

At this place, seven attributes of believing *mujāhidīn* have been described as those who repent, those who worship, those who praise Allah, those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. After having enumerated these seven attributes, the eighth attribute was put as: *الْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ*: 'those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah.' Actually, this expression is an embodiment of all attributes mentioned earlier. In other words, the details given in those seven attributes have been eloquently reduced to one small sentence which means that they are committed to the limits set by Allah, that is, they obey, adhere to and protect the injunctions of the Shari'ah of Islām.

At the end of the verse (112), it was said: *وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ* (And give the good news to the believers). It means that the Prophet of Islām should convey to believers who have the attributes mentioned above the good news of blessings nobody could ever imagine, nor could it be explained in words, nor has anyone heard about it from any source. The reference is to the ultimate blessings of Paradise.

Verses 113 - 114

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ

كَانُوا أَوْلَىٰ قُرْبَىٰ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١١٣﴾
وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَّوْعِدَةٍ
وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾

It is not for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the Mushriks*, even if they are kinsmen, after it became clear to them that they are the people of hell. [113]

And the prayer of Ibrāhīm for the forgiveness of his father was not but due to a promise he had made to him. Later when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he withdrew himself from him. Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft sighing (before Allah), forbearing. [114]

Commentary

The entire Sūrah Al-Taubah consists of injunctions of absolution and withdrawal from *kāfirs* (disbelievers) and *mushriks* (those who associate partners with Allah). The Sūrah opens with the words: **بَرَاءَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ** (Here is a withdrawal [proclaimed] by Allah) and that is why this Sūrah is also known as Sūrah al-Barā'ah. The injunctions appearing earlier relate to withdrawal and severance of relationships with *kāfirs* and *mushriks* in this worldly life. The same injunction of withdrawal and severance of relationships appears in the the present verses, but it relates to the life hereinafter. It makes it impermissible even to pray for the forgiveness of *kāfirs* and *mushriks* after their death – as it appears in a previous verse (84) where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been prohibited from offering funeral prayers for hypocrites.

The background of revelation

The event that was the cause or background of the revelation of this *āyah* has been reported in a narrative appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. According to this report, Abū Ṭalīb, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, had not, though, embraced Islām, yet he continued to support and protect the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم throughout his life. He did not listen to any member of his clan in this

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

matter. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too was concerned about him. He wished that his uncle would somehow recite the Kalimah and embrace Islām. He would thus be able to intercede on his behalf and he could have his deliverance from the punishment of Jahannam. When Abū Ṭalib was suffering from his last sickness and death became certain, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was worried. He wished if his uncle were to recite the Kalimah even now, things might work for him. He came close to him in that state of anxiety – but, Abū Jahl and ‘Abdullāh ibn Umayyah (disbelieving diehards) were already there. He said, ‘my uncle, recite the Kalimah: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (*Lā ilāha illallāh*). I shall try to seek forgiveness for you.’ But, Abū Jahl interrupted, ‘would you forsake the faith of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (father of Abū Ṭalib)?’ The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم repeated what he had said several times. But, every time, Abū Jahl would say the same thing he had said before – until the last words spoken by Abū Ṭalib were, ‘I am on the faith of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.’ It was in this very condition that he died. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم swore that he would continue seeking forgiveness for him until he was prohibited from it. Thereupon, this verse of prohibition was revealed where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and all Muslims were prohibited from praying for the forgiveness of *kāfirs* and *mushriks* – even if they were close relatives.

This put some Muslims into doubt. Was it not, they thought, that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام too had prayed for his disbelieving father? To answer it, the second verse (114) was revealed: مَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ. In gist, it means: As for the prayer made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for his father, it was conditioned by circumstances. In the beginning, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not know that he would keep on sticking to his disbelief right through the end and would die a disbeliever. In other words, his going to Hell was not certain. That was the time when he had made the promise that he would pray for his forgiveness: سَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ (I shall ask my Lord to forgive you – Maryam 19:47). Later, when it became clear to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام that he was an enemy of Allah, that is, he had remained a disbeliever right through the end, he elected to become indifferent to him and stopped asking pardon for him.

With regard to the mention of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام praying for the forgiveness of his father at different places in the Qur’ān, it should

all be taken in that sense, whereby it would mean that Allah may give him the *taufīq* of 'Imān and Islām so that he could be forgiven.

When the disbelievers inflicted a wound on the blessed face of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during the battle of Uḥud, he was seen wiping blood from his face and praying: *اَللّٰهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِقَوْمِيْ اِنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ* (O Allah, forgive my people. They do not know). The object of this prayer of forgiveness for the disbelievers is no other but that Allah may bless them with the *taufīq* of 'Imān and Islām so that they could become deserving of being forgiven.

Imām al-Qurṭubī said, 'this proves that it is permissible to pray for the forgiveness of a living *kāfir* with the intention that this disbelieving person may have the *taufīq* of 'Imān and become deserving of forgiveness.'

In the last sentence of the verse (114), it was said: *اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَآوَاهٌ حَلِيْمٌ* (Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft sighing [before Allah], forbearing). The word: *اواه* (*awwāh*) is used for a host of meanings. Al-Qurṭubī has reported fifteen meanings of this word but they are all close to each other without any real difference between them. Some of these are: one who sighs a lot, or one who supplicates profusely, or one who is full of mercy for the servants of Allah. This (last) meaning is reported from Sayyidna 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه.

Verses 115 - 116

وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًاۙ بَعْدَ اِذْ هَدٰهُمْۙ حَتّٰى يَبَيِّنَ لَهُمۙ
مَا يَتَّقُوْنَۙ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِۙ يُحْيِ وَيُمِيْتُۙ وَمَا لَكُمْۙ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ
وَلِيٍّۙ وَلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿١١٦﴾

And Allah is not to make a people go astray after He has given them guidance, unless He explains to them what they should avoid. Surely, in respect of everything Allah is (All-) Knowing. [115]

Surely, to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death. And, other than Allah, you have neither a supporter, nor a helper. [116]

Verses 117 - 119

لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ
 فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ
 ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ
 الَّذِينَ خُلِفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ
 وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَنْ لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ
 ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١١٨﴾
 يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

Surely, Allah has relented towards the Prophet and the Muhājirs (Emigrants) and the Anṣār (the Supporters) who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked, then He relented towards them. Surely, to them He is Very Kind, Very Merciful. [117]

And (He relented) towards the three whose matter was deferred until when the earth was straitened for them despite all its vastness, and even their own souls were straitened for them, and they realized that there is no refuge from Allah, except in Him. Then He turned towards them, so that they may repent. Surely, Allah is the Most-Relenting, the Very Merciful. [118]

O those who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful. [119]

Commentary

In the comments on verse 102: *وَأَخْرَجُوا عَتَرَتُنَا* (And there are those who admitted...), it was said that following the general call of Jihād at Tabūk which required all Muslims to join in, the people of Madīnah had split into five groups. Two of them were of those who elected to stay behind without any valid excuse, a detailed description of which has appeared in previous verses. Here, in the present verses, three kinds of sincere believers have been mentioned. First were those who responded to the call of Jihād instantly. They have been identified in the initial sentence: *إِتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ* (who followed him in the hour of

hardship) of verse 117. The second group was of those who hesitated during the early stage but recovered soon and got ready for Jihād with other participants. They have been described in the sentence: **مِنْ أَبْعَدِ مَا كَادَ يَرِيحُ قُلُوبُ قَوْمٍ مِنْهُمْ** (after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked) of the same verse (117).

The third group was that of the believers who did not, though, participate in the Jihād because of their laziness at that time, yet, later on, they regretted and sought forgiveness – and ultimately, the Taubah made by them was accepted. However, their group was further divided in two types. Originally, they were ten in number. Seven out of these men demonstrated their genuine remorse and repentance instantly soon after the return of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The manner in which they did so was unusual. They tied themselves up with the pillars of the Prophet's Mosque with the resolve that they would stay tied as long as their Taubah was not accepted. The verse known as the 'Āyah of Taubah granting forgiveness for them was revealed immediately then. Details can be seen under comments on verse 102. The remaining three out of the ten were those who did not act in that manner. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked his Companions to boycott them whereby no one was to greet or talk to them. This thing was terrible. It really disturbed them. They have been mentioned in the second verse (118) through the words: **وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلَفُوا** (And towards the three whose matter was deferred) where comes the acceptance of their Taubah soon after which the order to boycott them was withdrawn.

Before we move on to explain the first verse (117): **لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ** (Surely, Allah has relented towards the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Supporters who followed him in the hour of hardship) in some details, let us answer a question first.

Is it not that Taubah is done because of having committed an act of sin and disobedience? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is protected from that (*ma'sūm*). What, then, would be the sense of accepting his Taubah ('relenting towards the Prophet')? In addition to that, there were the Ṣaḥābah from among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār who had opted for Jihād since the very beginning. They too had not done anything wrong. For what crime had they made their Taubah that was accepted?

The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā made all of them safe from sin. This was expressed as Taubah, or that Allah Ta'ālā made all of them

tawwāb, those who turn to Allah. This indicates that no one is free from the need to make Taubah, not even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his closest Companions – as it appears in another verse: *وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا* (and turn towards Allah in repentance, all of you – 24:31). The reason is that the degrees and ranks of nearness to Allah are endless. Whoever has reached a certain station should realize that there is a higher station ahead and, as compared to that high station, the present one is a shortcoming. The quest must go on. Let one seek forgiveness for any shortcoming he may have at his present station so that he could move on to the next, the higher.

Coming to words: *سَاعَةَ الْعُسْرَةِ* (translated as ‘the hour of hardship’) appearing in verse 117, the Holy Qur’ān has employed this expression to portray the condition of the Muslims on the occasion of this very Jihād because they were poor and straitened on many counts. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says, ‘they had one mount for every ten men. They had to take turns to ride. The wherewithal required for such a trip was very short and ordinary. On the other hand, the heat was intense and scorching. Water in en route was scarce and at distances.

As for the next sentence: *مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَرِيحُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ* (after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked), the *زِغ* (*zaigh*: crookedness) of the hearts of some people referred to here does not mean some deviation from faith. In fact, it means to lose heart and wish to avoid action in Jihād because of the hardship of hot weather and the dearth of necessary supplies. Ḥadīth narratives prove that. It was in view of these hardships they faced that their repentance was accepted.

Verse 118 begins with the words: *وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلَفُوا* (And [He relented] towards the three whose matter was deferred). Here, the word: *خَلَفُوا* (*khullifū*) literally means ‘those left behind.’ It carries the sense of ‘those the matter of whose repentance was deferred’ – as opted for in the translation of the text. These three gentlemen: Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk, Murarah ibn Rabī' and Hilāl ibn Umayyah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين were from the Anṣār of Madīnah and had a distinguished record in the service of Islām. Earlier, they had participated in the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah and in many battles with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, it was only by chance that they slipped in this manner. Then, there were those hypocrites who did not take part in this Jihād because of their hypocrisy, they gave them the kind of advises that dampened their

courage. But, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from this Jihād, all those hypocrites came to him, presented false excuses, took false oaths and tried to please the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who entrusted the inward state of their hearts with Allah and simply accepted their outward declarations on oath. Thus, they went on living their normal lives. Some people gave the same suggestion to these Anṣārī gentlemen – that they should also establish their innocence by offering false excuses. But, their hearts admonished them. They knew that they had already committed a sin, that of remaining behind in Jihād. Now, how could they compound it with another sin, that of lying before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم? Therefore, they came up with a clean breast and confessed to their misconduct. In punishment, Muslims were asked not to greet or talk to them. In the end, the Holy Qurʾān laid bare the reality of the whole thing. Those who had fortified their excuses with false oaths were exposed, the details of which appear in several earlier verses from: يَتَذَكَّرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذْ ارْجِعْتُمُ إِلَيْهِمْ (They will make excuses to you – 94) to: عَلَيْهِمْ ذَاكِرَةُ السَّوْءِ (upon those is the evil cycle – 98). Regarding the truth told and confession made by these three gentlemen, it is enough to say that the fact of their Taubah was revealed in this verse. They faced fifty days of avoidance by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and a boycott of greeting and conversation by the Companions; a heart-rending experience indeed. Finally came the day when, amidst ecstatic scenes of having been so honorably acquitted and of exuberant congratulations for it, they regained the confidence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and that of all Muslims.

Details of the event relating to these three Anṣārī elders from authentic Aḥādīth

In the two authentic collections of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and in most books of Ḥadīth, there appears a lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Kaʿb ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه in connection with this event. Since, it consists of many elements of guidance, solutions of religious problems and facts worthy of consideration, therefore, it seemed appropriate that a full translation of this Ḥadīth should be reproduced here. Sayyidnā Kaʿb ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه, one of the three gentlemen, has described the details of this event as given below:

‘Every battle in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم participated, I was with him, except the battle of Tabūk. However, the battle of Badr

came all of a sudden, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had also not asked everyone to participate in it, and was also not angry with those who had not participated in it. In this too, I was not present. And I was also present on the night of the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah where we had made the covenant of supporting and protecting Islām. And this presence of mine at the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah is dearer to me as compared to my (possible) presence at the battle of Badr – though, the battle of Badr is better known among people. As for the background of my absence from the battle of Tabūk, the truth is that I had never been so rich as I was at that time. By God, I never had two mounts before that which I then had.

While marching out from Madīnah for his battles, the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was that he would conceal his intentions by advancing in a direction just the opposite of the direction in which he was to go for Jihād. The intention was to confuse spying hypocrites lest they sound off the enemy. And he used to say, 'in war, (such strategy of) deception (*khudāh*) is permissible.'

Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was ready to carry out his plan for the Jihād (of Tabūk, which was unusual for several reasons). The heat was intense. Muslim forces were short on supplies. The journey was long. Then, they were going to fight against an enemy stronger in strength and overwhelming in numbers. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made the call for Jihād openly and publicly so that Muslims could make all necessary preparations for it in advance.'

According to the report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the numerical strength of those who participated in this Jihād was more than ten thousand. Ḥakim reports from Sayyidnā Mu'adh رضى الله عنه who said, 'when we set out for this Jihād with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, our number was more than thirty thousand.'

'Since no muster roll of those who set out for this Jihād was put on record in writing, therefore, those who did not wish to go out for this Jihād had an opportunity on hand. If they did not go, nobody would be able to find that out, they thought. The time when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم set out for Jihād was a time when dates were ripe and the growers were busy. Such was the condition when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and common Muslims started getting ready for the journey. It was a Thursday when he set out for the journey. He liked to travel

on a Thursday, whether it was for Jihād or for some other purpose.

As for myself, I went out every morning to prepare for Jihād, but came back without having done it. My heart said, 'I am capable of Jihād. I must go.' But, days passed and my intention kept being put off until a tomorrow – until the time the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and common Muslims departed for Jihād. Still then, my heart kept urging me to leave and join up somewhere en route – alas, only if I were to do that! But, unfortunately, this could not be done.

When, after the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, wherever I went in Madīnah, the surroundings put me to grief. At that time, what one saw throughout Madīnah were sights of people who were either sunk in hypocrisy, or were sick and crippled absolutely unable to travel. On the other side, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not think of me anywhere on this whole journey until he reached Tabūk. It was there in a gathering that he said, 'what happened to Ka'b ibn Mālīk?'

A man from (the tribe of) Banū Salimah said, 'yā rasūlallāh, he has been detained by his nice dress and his looking towards his shoulders (in self-admiration). Then, Sayyidnā Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه told this man, 'what you have said is bad' – and then, turning to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he submitted – 'yā rasūlallāh, by God, we know nothing about him except that which is good.' Thereupon, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم became silent.

When I heard the news, says Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was coming back, I was concerned, almost close to concocting in a hurry some excuse for my absence and presenting things through which I could have escaped facing the displeasure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. May be I could have asked my family and friends also to help me out of this predicament. (Scruples like these kept destabilizing my heart) until I heard that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had arrived. Then, all these confusing thoughts were blotted out of my heart and I realized that I could never escape his displeasure on grounds that are contaminated with a lie. Therefore, I resolved to tell him the truth for I was convinced that truth alone would rescue me (from this situation).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم entered Madīnah. The time was

Ḍuḥā (*Chasht* in Urdu and Persian), that is, middle of morning after sunrise. It was the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he generally used to return from his journeys at this time and his practice was first to go to the Masjid, offer two *raka'āt* and then go to see Sayyidah Fāṭimah. After that, he went to meet his blessed wives.

This time too, as was his wont, he first went to the Masjid, offered two *raka'āt* and sat down in the Masjid. Some more than eighty hypocrites who had not gone to the expedition of Tabūk came to him offering false excuses on equally false oaths. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted what was outwardly expressed through their statements on oath, approved of their allegiance, prayed for their forgiveness and entrusted what was in their hearts with Allah.

It was under this situation that I presented myself before him. When I offered my *salām* to him, he smiled, smiling like someone angry. Then he said, 'come.' So I walked towards him until I sat down before him.' According to some Ḥadīth reports, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned his face away from him. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه said: *Yā rasūlallāh*, why would you turn your face away from me? By God, I have nothing to do with hypocrisy, nor have I ever suffered from any doubt about my religion, nor am I guilty of making any alterations to it. 'Then he said, 'why then, did you not go for Jihād? Is it not that you had already bought a mount for this purpose?

I said, 'Yes, *Yā rasūlallāh*. If I would have been sitting before anyone from common worldly people, other than you, I am confident that I would have invented some excuse and avoided his displeasure – because, I have been gifted with the art of debate. But, I swear by Allah that I have understood perfectly well that, should I tell you a lie – that may even please you temporarily – still, the day would not be far when Allah Ta'ālā would tell you the whole truth and thus make you displeased with me. And if I were to tell you the truth – which may at this moment make you displeased with me – I hope, Allah Ta'ālā will forgive me. The truth of the matter is that I had no excuse for remaining absent from the Jihād for I had never been stronger, both financially and physically, as I was at that time.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'this man has told the truth.' Then, he said, 'all right, go – until Allah Ta'ālā gives His decree in your case.' I rose to leave when some men from the tribe of Banī

Salimah tailed me and started saying, 'As far as we know, you never committed a sin before this. Why did you act so dumb? You could have at the least come up with some excuse as was done by others who were left behind. Had you done that, the prayer made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would have been sufficient to bring forgiveness for your sins. By God, these people kept admonishing me repeatedly, so much so that a thought crossed my mind urging me to go back and say that I was wrong about what I had said earlier and that I had the right excuse with me.

But, it occurred to me that I should not add another sin to the one I have done before. I have already committed a sin when I remained behind in the Jihād. How could I venture into another sin, that of lying? Then, I asked those people if there was anyone like me who had confessed to his misconduct. They told me that there were two others who had done what I did and they too were given the same reply as was given to me (that they should wait for the decree of Allah). I asked them as to who those two were. They told me that one of them was Murarah ibn Rabi' al-"Umariy while the other, Hilāl ibn Umayyah al-Wāqifiy.'

According to a report carried by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, the reason why the first of the two (that is, Murarah) was left behind is that he had a date farm where the fruit was ripening. He said to himself, 'you have taken part in many battles before this. If you do not go for Jihād this year, how would that become a crime?' Later, when he was alerted to his sinful thought, he promised to Allah that he has given this date farm in the way of Allah as a *ṣadaqah* from him.

As for the other gentleman, Sayyidnā Hilāl ibn 'Umayyah رضى الله عنه, his family has been living scattered since long. At that time, they had assembled all together. He thought of not going to Jihād that year and spending some time with his family. He too, when reminded of his sin, promised that he would stay away from his family from that time onwards.

Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه says, 'these people mentioned two blessed souls who were from among the *mujāhidīn* of the battle of Badr. I said, 'that is it. What these two did is worth following for me.' Saying this, I went home.

On the other side, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم prohibited his Companions from greeting or talking to the three of us. As for us, we loved all Muslims as usual, but they were the ones who had turned away from us.'

It appears in a report of Ibn Abī Shaibah that 'now we were in a condition that we would go to people, but they would not talk to us, nor greet us, nor respond to our greetings.'

Musnad 'Abd al-Razzāq reports the statement of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه as follows: 'what a time that was when the small world around us had changed totally. It seemed as if the people who used to be there are not there any more, nor our fruit farms, nor our homes, none of these were what they used to be. Everything looked strange. I became seriously concerned about myself. If I die in this state of mine, I thought, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not say the Ṣalāh of Janāzah (funeral prayer) for me. Or, if the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were to breath his last during this period, I shall be running around just like this all my life, condemned and disgraced before everyone. For this reason, as far as I was concerned, the whole Earth started appearing indifferent and desolate. So, we lived like that for fifty nights. At that time, the two companions of mine (Murārah and Hilāl) lost heart, sat home and wept. But, I was younger. I went out, walked around and made my Ṣalāh in the Masjid with other Muslims and roamed in the bazaars but nobody would talk to me nor respond to my *salām* greetings. I used to attend the customary sitting of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after the Ṣalāh was over. When I said my *salām* to him, I tried to figure out whether or not the blessed lips of the Holy Prophet moved to respond to my *salām*. Then I tried to offer my Ṣalāh just about close to him from where I would steal a glance towards him and discover that he looks at me when I get busy with my Ṣalāh, and when I look towards him, he turns his face away.

When this (considered) indifference of these people dragged longer, I went to my cousin Abū Qatādah who was the dearest of my friends. I jumped a wall to enter his farm and said my *salām* to him. By God, he too did not respond to my *salām*. I asked, 'O Abū Qatādah, do you not know that I love Allah Ta'ālā and His *rasūl*?' Even then, Abū Qatādah observed silence. He did not respond. When I repeated my question again and again, then – probably, the third or the fourth time – he

only said, 'Allah and His *rasūl* know best.' I broke into tears and came out of the farm jumping over the compound wall as I had done earlier. During those days, once I was walking through a bazaar of Madīnah when, all of a sudden, I noticed a farmer from Syria who had come to Madīnah to sell grains. I saw him asking people if anyone there could tell him the address of Ka'b ibn Mālīk? When they saw me right there, they pointed out to me. The man came to me and gave me a letter from the king of Ghassān that was written on a silk handkerchief. It said:

'After salutations, I have come to know that your Prophet has betrayed you and that he has made you stay away from him. (I assure you) God has not chosen to put you in a place of disgrace and destruction. If you like to come to us, come. We shall help you.'

When I read this letter, I said to myself, 'here comes another test and trial for me when, of all the people, the partisans of disbelief (*kufr*) have now been tempted to expect such things from me (that I go and join them)!' Taking this letter in my hands, I stepped forward. There was a bread-baking shop with a heated oven. I threw the letter down into it.

Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه says, 'when forty out of the fifty nights had passed, I was given a surprise by Khuzaymah ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه, a message bearer of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who came towards me and said, 'the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has ordered that you should stay apart from your wife as well.' I said, 'should I divorce her? Or, do what?' He told me, 'no, just do not go near her.' The same order was communicated to my two companions also. I told my wife, 'go to the home of your parents and stay there till Allah Ta'ālā opens a way for us.'

After having heard this order, Khawlah bint 'Aṣīm, the wife of Hilāl ibn Umayyah came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the plea that Hilāl ibn Umayyah was old and weak and that he had no servant to look after him. It also appears in a report of Ibn Abī Shaybah that she also said, 'he is weak-sighted as well. Would you not like to allow me to continue serving him?' He said, 'serving him is no problem, however, he should not seek to be near you.' She said, 'as for that, He is in to a state wherein he has no such desire – and, by God, he keeps weeping day and night.'

Ka'b ibn Mālīk says, 'some of my relatives and friends suggested to me too that I should also ask the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to allow me to keep my wife with me – similar to the permission he has given to Hilāl. I said, 'I will not do that. Who knows what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would say in reply? In addition to that, I am young (that is, living with one's wife was against precaution).' In this condition, I passed ten more nights until the count of fifty nights became complete.' The narrative of Musnad 'Abd al-Razzāq says, 'At that stage, the Divine decree about our Taubah (repentance) was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at the hour when one third of the night had passed. The Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Umm Salamah who was there at that time said, 'If you wish, Ka'b ibn Mālīk can be informed about it right now.' He said, 'That will bring a crowd of people here right now. It would become impossible to sleep for the rest of the night.'

Ka'b ibn Mālīk says, 'when the fiftieth night passed, I made my Fajr Ṣalāh and went to the roof. While I sat there my condition was a mirror of what Allah Ta'ālā has said in the Qur'ān – that the Earth was straitened for me despite all its vastness, and my own soul was straitened for me. (118) All of a sudden came the voice of a caller calling from the heights of the hill of Sal' loudly announcing: 'O Ka'b ibn Mālīk, 'Be happy with the good news'.

In a report from Muḥammad ibn 'Amr, it is said that the caller was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه who went up the hill of Sal' to announce that Allah Ta'ālā had accepted the Taubah of Ka'b and offered congratulations for his success. And narration of 'Uqbah says that two men ran to give this good news to Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه. When one ran ahead of the other, the one who had remained behind turned, climbed the hill of Sal', and announced the good news from there. It is said that the blessed souls who ran in that manner were Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين .

Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه says, 'Hearing this voice, I fell down prostrating in Sajdah. So happy was I that I broke into tears. I had learnt that my good days have come back. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had told the Ṣaḥābah after the Ṣalāh of Fajr that our Taubah was accepted. Everyone ran out to congratulate the three of us. Some of them rode on horses to reach me. But, the voice of the person calling

from the hill was quicker than the horse.

When I came out to present myself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, I saw that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sitting there. There was a cordon of his Ṣaḥābah around him. When Ṭalḥah ibn ‘Ubaidullāh saw me, he was the first to rise and rush towards me. Shaking my hands, he congratulated me for the acceptance of my Taubah. I cannot forget the good Ṭalḥah did to me on that day. When I said my *salām* to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his blessed face was radiant with delight. He said, ‘O Ka’b, I congratulate you for this day of bliss for you, the best day of your life since you were born.’ I said, ‘*Yā rasūlallāh*, is this order from you or is it from Allah Ta‘ālā?’ ‘No,’ he said, ‘this order is from Allah Ta‘ālā. You had told the truth. Allah Ta‘ālā made your truthfulness come out in the open.’

When I sat down before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, I said to him, ‘*Yā rasūlallāh*, I wish to walk out of all my wealth and property and give it as *ṣadaqah* in the way of Allah. This will be a part of my Taubah.’ ‘No,’ he said, ‘hold some of it for your needs. This is better.’ I said, ‘all right, can I give half of it as *ṣadaqah*?’ He rejected that too. Then, I asked his permission to give one-third of it. This he accepted. I said, ‘*Yā rasūlallāh*, I have been delivered from my predicament by Allah because I told the truth, therefore, I pledge before you that, as long as I live, I shall not say anything but the truth.’ Then, says Sayyidnā Ka’b رضى الله عنه, ‘since the time I had given this pledge to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, *al-ḥamdulillāh*, no word of lie was uttered by me up to this day – and I hope Allah Ta‘ālā shall protect me from it for the rest of my life.’ Sayyidnā Ka’b رضى الله عنه also says, ‘By God, after the blessing of Islām, I cannot think of having received a blessing greater than this. I mean that I told the truth before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that I did not lie – because, had I lied, I would have been ruined like those who took false oaths. About them the Qur’ān said: سَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ (They will swear by Allah before you, so that you may ignore their misdeeds – 95) up to فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ (Allah will not be pleased with the sinning people – 96).

It has been said that the continuation of the boycott of these three gentlemen was, perhaps, based on the wisdom that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had spent exactly fifty days during the expedition of Tabūk. (The entire narration of this Ḥadīth and the related event has been taken from Tafsīr Mazharī)

Points of Guidance from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk

The clarity and detail with which Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه has described his story contains many elements of guidance for Muslims. Therefore, this Ḥadīth has been presented here in full. These are as follows:

1. This Ḥadīth tells us that it was the customary practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in his usual battle plans that he would march out of Madīnah in a (feigned) direction that was opposite to the direction he was to go actually. The objective was to keep enemies of Islām in the dark about where to and against whom he was going to carry out his Jihād. This is what he defined as: *الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ* (*al-ḥarbu khuda'ah*) that is, 'in war, deception is permissible.' Some people fall in doubt about the drift of this statement. They think that deceiving the adversary by lying in war or Jihād is permissible. This is not correct. In fact, it means the kind of deception whereby one acts in a manner that succeeds in deceiving enemies. For instance, marching out for Jihād from the opposite direction does not mean deceiving by lying blandly – something not permissible even in war. Similarly, it should also be understood that this practical deception, which has been declared permissible, has no bearing on abiding by a pledge or treaty. Breaking of a pledge or treaty, whether in peace or war, is not permissible under any situation.

2. For his journeys, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم liked a Thursday, whether it was for Jihād or for some other purpose.

3. Telling a lie to please some elder or spiritual guide or teacher or father is neither permissible nor does it end well. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he was informed of the truth through revelation, therefore, the ultimate outcome of lying was evil – as clarified through the event relating to Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه and to others who remained behind. After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, no saint or savant or pious elder or spiritual guide can claim to be a recipient of revelation. Then, getting to know things through inspiration (*ilhām*) and illumination (*kashf*) is not necessary either. But, experience shows that lying has an aura of evil about it, something that brings bad consequences in its wake. Causes converge naturally, so much so that this respected elder ultimately becomes displeased with the liar.

4. From this event we learn that the Amīr (the executive head) of

Muslims also has the right to order them to stop greeting and talking to someone as a punishment for some sinful misconduct of his – as it happened with these three gentlemen in the event concerned.

5. This event is a mirror of the love his Companions had for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The depth and extent of this love compelled them to continue staying in his company even during the days when he was displeased with them and they were subjected to a social boycott by the Companions who would neither greet, nor acknowledge greetings nor talk to them. A careful reader through the narration of the event would hardly miss their affection and concern for him particularly when they would look at their master with the corners of their eyes and try to assess the warmth of his attention and the emotional level of the bond between them. They were really tuned to him under all circumstances.

6. As for the attitude of Sayyidnā Abū Qatādah رضى الله عنه, cousin and friend of Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, who did not respond to the latter's *salām* nor talked to him, it is fairly obvious that he did not do so because of some enmity, hostility or malice. In fact, this was done for the sole reason that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had ordered him to do so and that he was duty-bound to follow it. This tells us that the law given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not only enforced on the physical exterior of people but was also implemented inwardly as well. The law ruled over their hearts. They would not do anything against it under any condition, present or absent – even if they had to act against the dearest of their friends and relatives.

7. The episode relating to the king of the Ghassān who wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه who threw it down into a heated oven shows how staunch as believers the Ṣaḥābah were. Here is one of them, terribly nervous about the displeasure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the boycott by fellow Muslims, yet the tempting offer made by a King fails to move his heart in that direction.

8. That Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar and other noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين ran to congratulate Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه as soon as they heard about the acceptance of his Taubah is significant. Let us keep in mind that they had avoided the social graces of greeting and talking before this happened. This shows that the love for Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه was very much present in their

hearts even during the days of the boycott – though, they had to surrender it in favor of carrying out the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When the 'Āyah of Taubah (the verse of repentance) was revealed, their deep mutual affection became manifest.

9. From the conduct of the noble Ṣaḥābah who went to disclose the good news to and congratulate Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, we learn that congratulating friends on a happy occasion has its basis in Sunnah.

10. When repenting from a sin, taking out a *ṣadaqah* from one's assets helps to do away with the effects of sin, but it is not good to give away the whole of it in charity. Giving more than one third of what one owns in *ṣadaqah* was not liked by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Advice to Muslims: Observe Taqwā and be with those true in word and deed

This brings us to the last verse: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ (O those who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful – 119). The event of having remained behind as related to some other-wise sincere people, and the ultimate acceptance of their repentance, was all a result of their Taqwā, the fear of Allah and the sense of being responsible before him. Therefore, in this verse, the large masses of Muslims have been instructed to observe Taqwā (as a constant feature of their personal lives). Then, by saying: كُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ (be in the company of the truthful), it was hinted that the only way to achieve Taqwā was to frequent the company of those who are good in their deeds and true in their words, and to approximate one's own conduct to theirs. Perhaps, this may also be pointing out to the slip made by these people that was caused by the company they kept with hypocrites and their suggestions and advises they listened to. One should stay away from the company of those who are disobedient to Allah, and take to the company of the truthful. The Qur'ān has not said 'the learned' ('*ulamā*') or 'the righteous' (*ṣulahā*) at this place. Rather, by electing to use the word: الصَّادِقِينَ (*aṣ-ṣādiqīn*: the truthful), it has also told us about the real identity of the 'learned' and the 'righteous'. Such a truthful person has to be the one whose exterior and the interior are the same and who is also true in intention, and true in word, and true in deed as well.

Verses 120 - 121

مَا كَانَ لِأَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ أَنْ يَتَخَلَّفُوا

عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَرْغَبُوا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۖ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيبُهُمْ ظَمَأٌ وَلَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَطْئُونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَيْلًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً وَلَا يَقْطَعُونَ وَادِيًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

It was not for the people of Madīnah and for those around them of the Bedouins to stay behind abandoning the Messenger of Allah, nor to prefer their own lives to his life. That is because whatever thirst or fatigue or hunger strikes them in the way of Allah, and whenever they step into a place which infuriates the infidels, and whenever they make a gain from an enemy, a virtuous deed is credited to their account. Surely, Allah does not destroy the reward of the virtuous. [120] And whatever they spend, be it less or more, and whenever they cross a valley, is all written down for them, so that Allah may give them the best reward for what they used to do. [121]

Commentary

The two verses cited above admonish those who missed to join the expedition of Tabūk for no valid reason. They have also been told that they did what was not proper. Then the verses describe the merits of people who take part in Jihād and tell us about the great rewards they get for everything they do there. Included here is the causing of hurt or loss to the enemy and the using of a strategy that infuriates the adversary. All these are good deeds, and worthy of *thawāb* (reward from Allah).

Verse 122

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً ۚ فَلَوْ لَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ

مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا
إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

And it is not for the believers to go forth all together. So, why should it not be that a group from every section of them goes forth, so that they may acquire perfect understanding of the Faith, and so that they may warn their people when they return to them, that they may be cautious. [122]

Commentary

It will be realized that the expedition of Tabūk has continued appearing as an important subject in Sūrah Al-Taubah. For this battle, a general call of Jihād was given asking all Muslims to participate in it. It was not permissible to contravene the order without a valid excuse. Those who did that were mostly hypocrites who have been mentioned in several verses appearing earlier. Then, some sincere Muslims had also remained behind due to their incidental laziness. Their repentance was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. Obviously, from all these events it can be gathered that the going forth of all Muslims in every Jihād is *farḍ* (obligatory) and staying behind is *ḥarām* (unlawful) – although, this is not the religious law. In fact, Jihād during normal conditions is *Farḍ al-Kifayah*, a collective obligation. It means that, should a number of Muslims sufficient for Jihād keeps engaged in Jihād, rest of the Muslims stand absolved of the obligation. However, if the number participating in Jihād turns out to be insufficient to the limits of being overpowered, it becomes obligatory on Muslims living nearby that they should come out to strengthen them and fight with them in the Jihād. If they too are not sufficient, the obligation falls on those near the later, and if they too are not sufficient, it falls on Muslims adjoining the later. This could reach the limit when, under such emergent conditions, Jihād becomes *Farḍ 'Ain* (absolute individual obligation) on Muslims of the whole world, and it will be *ḥarām* (unlawful) to avoid participating in *jihād*. Similarly, it could also become equally obligatory (*farḍ*) if the Amir of Muslims, seeing the need, gives a general call and invites Muslims to join the mission of Jihād. At that time too, participation in Jihād becomes obligatory (*farḍ*) and staying behind becomes *ḥarām* (unlawful) – as it happened in the expedition of Tabūk

due to the general call of Jihād given for it. The verse cited above clarifies that this order to join the Jihād of Tabūk was a specific order due to the general call for it. Under normal conditions, Jihād is not an individual obligation (Farḍ al-‘Ain) that would require all Muslims to go forth in Jihād as a matter of obligation – because, like Jihād, there are other collective concerns and important undertakings of Islām and Muslims that are Farḍ al-Kifāyah, also like Jihād. To fulfill these responsibilities too, different groups of Muslims have to follow the principle of division of work. Therefore, all Muslims should not go forth in every Jihād. The submission here may also help you understand the reality of Farḍ al-Kifāyah. The, areas of work that are not individual, but collective in nature, and the responsibility of carrying these out falls on all Muslims, are areas that the Shari‘ah of Islām has declared to be Farḍ al-Kifāyah. The purpose is that everything keeps being taken care of in its respective area and that all collective duties continue to be fulfilled. Duties such as washing, shrouding, offering Ṣalāh of Janāzah and burying deceased Muslims, the making and maintaining of mosques, Jihād and the guarding of Islāmic frontiers are all separate duties that are subject to the same rule of Farḍ al-Kifāyah. In other words, the responsibility of fulfilling these obligations though falls on the Muslims of the whole world as a matter of principle but, should some of them were to do that satisfactorily enough, other Muslims also stand absolved of the obligation. An important area of work that falls within the imperatives of this Farḍ al-Kifāyah is the religious education. That it is an obligation has been particularly mentioned in this verse by saying that this obligation should not be left out unattended even during the period of engagement in as important a duty as Jihād. The way in which it could be accomplished is that a smaller section from out of every large section sets forth for Jihād while the rest of people keep engaged in the pursuit of religious education. Then, those so educated should orient Muslims going on Jihād as well as teach and train others in their religion.

The obligation of acquiring religious knowledge, and its etiquette

Imām al-Qurtubī has said, ‘this verse is the root and foundation of religious knowledge (the *‘ilm* of *dīn*) for its seeker.’ If looked at carefully, also given here is a brief curriculum (*niṣāb*) of religious education, as well as the duties of the person (*‘ālim*) who has qualified as one who

has this knowledge. Therefore, this subject is being taken up in some details.

The merits (*faḍā'il*) of acquiring religious knowledge

Muslim scholars have written regular books on the merits of religious knowledge, great rewards (*thawāb*) it brings and aspects related with it. Some brief reports relevant to the occasion are being cited here. Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه who narrated that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saying, 'whoever travels on a path for seeking knowledge (*'ilm* of *dīn*), Allah Ta'ālā will – in reward (*thawāb*) for his effort – turn the orientation of his path towards Paradise.'

A series of Ḥadīth narratives appearing in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī report that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

1. 'The angels of Allah spread out their wings for (welcoming) the seeker of knowledge;'
2. 'Allah's creatures in the heavens and the earth and fishes in the waters of the world pray for such seekers;'
3. 'The superiority of the 'Ālim over the person who devotes to voluntary acts of worship (*nafl 'ibadāt*) abundantly is like the superiority of the full moon over the rest of the stars;'
4. 'Ulamā' are the inheritors of the blessed prophets;'
5. 'The blessed prophets leave no gold and silver as inheritance, but they do leave the legacy of knowledge. So, whoever inherits this legacy of knowledge has inherited great wealth.'

Dārimī reports a Ḥadīth in his Musnad which says: 'Someone asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: There were two men in Banī Isrā'īl. One was an 'Alim who would offer his prayers and then get busy teaching people their religion. The other fasted during the day and stood for prayers during the night. Of the two, who is superior? He said, "That 'Ālim (man of religious knowledge) is superior to the 'Ābid (man of religious worship) as I am superior to a very common person from among you." (Reported by Imām Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in his book, Jami'u Bayān al-'Ilm, from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه with relevant chain of narrators.) (Qurṭubī)

And the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'a *faqīh* (expert Muslim

jurist), when confronting Shaytān, is stronger than a thousand worshippers.’ (Tirmidhī from Ibn ‘Abbās – as in Maḏharī). Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also said, ‘when a person dies, his deeds come to an end – except three, the *thawāb* (reward) of which keeps reaching that person even after death. One: *ṣadaqah jāriyah* (act of charity the benefits of which continue) such as *maṣjid*, building for religious education or institutions of public welfare. Two: Knowledge through which people continue to benefit even later on. (For example, a student of religion became an ‘Ālim who set in motion a chain of learning and teaching the knowledge of religion for future generations; or someone wrote a book from which people kept benefiting even after the author was gone). Three: Children who are good (in character and up-bringing) and who keep praying for parents and do things the reward (*thawāb*) of which continues to reach them.’ (Qurtubī)

Details of Individual and Collective Obligation in the Learning of Religion

Backed by sound authority, Ibn ‘Adiyy and al-Baihaqī report from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ (Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim). (Maḏharī). It is all too obvious that the sense of ‘ilm (knowledge) – as in this Ḥadīth, as well as in those quoted a little earlier – is nothing but the ‘ilm of *dīn* (the knowledge of religion). Granted that worldly arts and sciences may be necessary for one as a part of the material management of life on this earth, but their merits are not the same as mentioned in the Āḥadīth appearing above. Then, the ‘ilm of *dīn* (knowledge of religion) is not some solitary area of knowledge. It is a comprehensive system composed of many sciences. Then, it is also obvious that every Muslim man and woman does not have the capacity to acquire full mastery over all these sciences. Therefore, when the Ḥadīth speaks of ‘knowledge being obligatory on every Muslim,’ it means the particular part of the knowledge of religion without which one can neither fulfill his or her obligations, nor stay away from the *ḥarām* (unlawful things) – being principles that are inseparably necessary for ‘Imān and Islām. As for the rest of the sciences, we should keep in mind that there are many more details of explanations, elements of wisdom and issues culled from the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth alone, not to mention the great range of injunctions and laws deduced from these sources. These are things beyond the capacity and control of every

Muslim, nor has this been made an individual obligation (Fard al-'Ain) for each one of them. However, this is Fard al-Kifayah (collective obligation), and as such, it becomes the responsibility of the Islāmic world as a whole. The presence of one 'Ālim, a genuine expert in all these sciences and religious laws in every city makes the rest of Muslims absolved of this obligation. If a city or township has not even one 'Ālim, it becomes obligatory on the people of the city or township that they should arrange to make someone from among themselves an 'Ālim. If that is also not possible, they should invite one from outside, keep him in their city so that they can know, understand and act according to the *fatwā* of this scholar, specially when the need is acute and the problems are delicate. Therefore, given below are details of Fard al-'Ain and Fard al-Kifayah as they relate to the 'ilm of *dīn* (knowledge of religion):

Fard al-'Ain: Individual Obligation

It is obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman, to acquire the knowledge of:

1. Islām's correct and authentic 'Aqā'id (beliefs).
2. Rules of Ṭahārah (purity) and Najāsah (impurity).
3. Ṣalāh (prayers), Ṣawm (fasting) and all 'Ibadāt made *farḍ* (obligatory) or *wājib* (necessary) by the Shari'ah.
4. Things declared to be *ḥarām* (unlawful) or *makrūh* (reprehensible or repugnant).
5. The rulings and injunctions of Zakāh (prescribed alms) on the part of one who owns property or wealth above the fixed *niṣāb* or threshold.
6. The rulings and injunctions of Ḥajj on the part of one who has the capability of performing Ḥajj, for it is an individual obligation on him or her.
7. The rulings and injunctions of sale and lease (*bai'* and *ijārah*) on the part of one who has to buy and sell or run a business or industry or work on wages or salary, for it is his individual obligation to do that.
8. The rulings and injunctions of *nikāh* (marriage) when getting married – and of *ṭalāq* (divorce) as well.

In brief, there are things the Shari'ah of Islām has made obligatory

or necessary on everyone. Acquiring the knowledge of the rules relating to these is also obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman.

Knowing about Spiritual Purification is also an Individual Obligation (Farḍ al-‘Ain)

Everyone knows that the knowledge of the imperatives relating to one's outward acts like Ṣalāh and Ṣawm is Farḍ al-‘Ain. However, Qāḍī Thanāullah Panīpatī, the author of Tafsīr Maḥzarī has written under his commentary on this verse that it is also *farḍ al-‘ain* to acquire the knowledge of the imperatives and prohibition pertaining to one's inner acts and qualities. This kind of knowledge is usually called the science of *Taṣawwuf*. Since these imperatives fall under the category of *farḍ al-‘ain*, their knowledge too is *farḍ al-‘ain*.

But, the field of knowledge called Taṣawwuf in our time has, become a potpourri of many fields of knowledge and insights, illuminations and sense experiences. What is meant by Farḍ al-‘Ain at this place is nothing but that part of it which deals with the obligatory injunctions pertaining to one's inner acts and qualities. For instance, there is the matter of true, correct and authentic ‘Aqā'id (beliefs). These relate to man's inward state. Or, take the case of spiritual virtues like *ṣabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), *tawakkul* (trust), *qanā'ah* (satisfaction with the available) and similar others. These are obligatory (*farḍ*) in a particular degree. Or take the case of spiritual vices like pride and arrogance, malice and rancor, miserliness and greed for the material and similar others. These are *ḥarām* (forbidden) on the authority of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. So, it is also obligatory (*farḍ*) on every Muslim, man and woman, that he and she must find out the reality behind these and learn the methods of acquiring virtues and avoiding what has been forbidden. (Irrespective of the claims made in the field of Taṣawwuf or in its counter-Islāmic versions of mysticism and its many derivations) the sole basis of Taṣawwuf is no more than what is Farḍ 'Ain (under Islāmic Law).

Farḍ al-Kifāyah

To comprehend why the 'Ilm of *Dīn* (the full knowledge of religion) has been made Farḍ al-Kifāyah, it will be useful to glance through what it entails. For your convenience, the integrated whole appears in three parts as follows:

1. To understand the meanings and rulings of the entire Qur'ān,

2. To understand all Āḥadīth and to master the ability to sift and recognize the trustworthy from the untrustworthy,

3. To acquire a complete knowledge of all injunctions and rulings deduced from the Qur'ān, and Sunnah and a full awareness of the views of the Ṣaḥābah, the Ṭābi'īn and the Muḥtāhid Imāms, expressed by them orally or practically.

Knowing all this is a monumental task which is not easy even after one devotes. Therefore, the Shari'ah of Islām has declared this field of knowledge to be Farḍ al-Kifāyah, that is, if some people acquire all this knowledge to the extent of its need in community life, rest of Muslims shall stand absolved.

The curriculum of the 'Ilm of Dīn

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has used one single word to tell us about the essence of the knowledge or science of religion, and its curriculum as well. If the text had chosen to say something like: **يَتَعَلَّمُوا الدِّينَ** (that is, so that they acquire the knowledge of religion), it would have obviously suited the occasion. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has bypassed the word: **تعلم** (*ta'allum*: learning) and elected to go by the word: **تَفَقَّهُ** (*tafaqquh*: understanding). This gives a clear indication that a simple reading of the 'ilm of dīn is not enough. This is something many disbelievers, Jews and Christians also do. Then, Shayṭān is supposed to have it all, more than anyone. The fact of the matter is that the 'ilm of dīn means 'to create an understanding of religion.' This is the exact translation of the word: **تَفَقَّهُ** (*tafaqquh*) in the verse. A derivation from: **فَقْه** (*fiqh*), which essentially means understanding and comprehension. At this point, it is worth noticing that the Holy Qur'ān has not even said: **يَتَفَقَّهُوا الدِّينَ** (*liyafqahud-dīn*: so that they understand the religion) by employing the verb from the simple (bare, denuded) form. Instead, the Qur'ān has said: **يَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ** (*liyatafaqqahū fi 'd-dīn*: so that they may acquire a perfect understanding of the Faith). Being from '*bāb al tafa''ul* (باب تفعل), it has the added sense of exertion and striving in its pursuit. Thus, the drive of the meaning is that they should, while trying to create a perfect understanding of religion, acquire the maximum possible expertise through continuous striving, hard work and endurance. Then, it is also evident that the kind of understanding of religion we are talking about does not materialize by finding out the problems and solutions concerning purity, impurity, prayers, fasting,

Zakāh and Ḥajj. In fact, the understanding of religion means that one understands that he or she will have to account for every word, deed, movement and rest in the Hereafter, and that how should he or she live in this world (in view of that). The perfect understanding of religion is really the name of this concern. Therefore, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah defines *fiqh* (understanding) by saying, 'that one understands everything the doing of which is necessary for him or her, and also understands everything abstaining from which is necessary for him or her.' As for the current definition of 'Ilmu 'l-Fiqh as a religious science that deals with its subsidiary problems and rulings, it is a later day terminology. The reality of Fiqh as it appears in Qur'an and Sunnah is no more than what the great Imām has stated: 'a person who has read through all books of religion but did not acquire this understanding is not an 'Ālim in the terminology of Qur'an and Sunnah.' So, the gist of the investigation made here tells us that, in the terminology of the Qur'an, the sense of acquiring the knowledge of religion is to acquire its understanding, regardless of sources employed in such acquisition. These may be books or the company of teachers. They all form part of the curriculum.

The essential duty of an 'Ālim after he acquires the knowledge of Dīn

This too the Holy Qur'an has put in one single sentence: **يُنْذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ** : "so that they may warn their people (against the disobedience of Allah)." At this place as well, it is worth attention that the sentence has identified 'the warning of a people' as a duty of the 'Ālim. The Arabic word: **انذار** (*indhār*) is usually translated into English as warning in the sense of putting the fear of something into someone, though it still does not convey the ultimate sense in full. The truth of the matter is that such warning or putting the fear of what must be avoided can take many forms. For instance, one may warn against an enemy, thief, robber or some beast or poisonous creeper. Then, there is the kind of warning a father would give, out of his affection and concern for his children, against things that hurt, like the fire, poisonous insects and unhealthy food. This is based on love, and on the desire to protect which has a special tone and temper, totally different from the former. *Indhār* is the name of warning given in that manner and with that motive. Therefore, prophets and messengers of Allah have been given the title of **نذير** (*nadhīr*: warner) and this duty of warning people assigned to

the 'Alim is really nothing but a part of the legacy left by prophets which, according to the binding authority of Ḥadīth, the 'Alim inherits.

At this point, we may also wish to consider that the blessed prophets are known by two appellations: Bashīr and Nadhīr. You already know the meaning of *nadhīr* (warner) from the preceding discussion. Bashīr means one who gives *bashārah*, that is, good news or glad tidings. It is a part of the mission of blessed prophets that they give glad tidings to those who act righteously. Though, at this place too, what has been mentioned is *indhār* or warning explicitly, yet, other textual imperatives show that it is also the duty of an 'Alim that he should give good news of rewards too for those who do good deeds. Now that the mention of *indhār* (warning) has been considered sufficient at this place has its reason. Actually, it indicates that man is charged with two things. One: that he elects to do what is beneficial for him in this world and in the world to come. Two: that he avoids doing things likely to bring harm to him. People of learning and people of wisdom both agree that the later of the two has the higher priority. In the terminology of Muslim jurists, this is known as 'bringing benefit' and 'repelling harm' and the latter has been given precedence to the former. In addition to that, when harm is repelled, it serves the purpose of bringing benefit in its own way, because if someone abandons what is beneficial and necessary for him, it brings harm. Given this situation, whoever makes the effort to stay safe from the harmful effects of bad deeds will also make the effort to stay away from leaving off what one must do necessarily.

From here we also learn the main reason why religious sermons and acts of *da'wah* generally remain ineffective in our time. We have seen a glimpse of the cardinal etiquette of *indhār* or warning, as given above. Contemporary sermons and acts of *da'wah* seem to miss the manners, something that would exude care, concern, attachment, mercy and the earnest wish to give out what is really good for the listeners, not only in words but through the style of address and the empathy of tone and diction as well. It would be wonderful if the addressee comes to believe that the things the speaker is saying do not aim at disgracing him or settling scores against him, in fact, this person is telling me what he thinks is good and beneficial for me just out of love. If the *tabligh* we do today or the *da'wah* we carry to correct people who

violate commandments of the Sharī'ah were to adopt this pattern of behavior, it is absolutely certain that it will bring forth at least one immediate response: the addressees will not be apprehensive, irritated, dogmatic or obstinate about our submission. They would not worry about confronting us. Everyone would, rather, become attuned to himself and start sorting out his own doings and thinking about what was going to happen to him. And if this effort continues, the time is to come, sooner or later, when such a person will be even willing to accept what had been presented before him. The second outcome of this attitude is that it will not, at least, generate mutual hatred and altercation, something which holds contemporary Muslims in its grips.

In the end, by saying: *لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ* (that they may be cautious), it was also indicated that the duty of an 'Alim was not simply limited to putting the fear of Allah's punishment in the hearts of people. Instead, he also has to watch and assess the extent and measure of the effect generated by his *tabligh* and *da'wah*. May be it did not work the first time. If so, let him do it again and again, until he sees its result: "يَحْذَرُونَ" with his own eyes, which means that his people have become cautious and have started staying away from sins. Allah knows best.

Verses 123 - 127

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ
وَلِجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلَظَةً ۖ وَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾
وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَقُولُ أَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَذِهِ
إِيمَانًا ۚ فَآمَنُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا ۚ وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ
﴿١٢٤﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَى
رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ أَوَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُونَ
فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوبُونَ وَلَا هُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ
﴿١٢٦﴾ وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ ۖ هَلْ
يَرَاكُمْ مِّنْ أَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوا ۖ صَرَفَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ
لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

O those who believe, fight those disbelievers who are near you, and let them find severity in you. And be sure that Allah is with the God-fearing. [123]

And when a Sūrah is sent down, some of them say, "Who among you has been increased in faith by it?" As for those who believe, they have been increased in faith by it, and they are quite happy. [124]

But those who have malady in their hearts are increased by it in impurity in addition to their own impurity, and they die infidels. [125]

Do they not see that they are put to trial every year once or twice, still they do not repent, nor do they take lesson? [126]

And when a Sūrah is sent down, they look at each other (as if saying): "Is there someone watching you?" Then they slip off. Allah has turned their hearts, because they are a people who do not understand. [127]

Commentary

Previous verses carried inducement to Jihād. The first verse from the present ones (123) which opens with the words: **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا** (O those who believe, fight those disbelievers who are near you) gives details, for disbelievers are spread out all over the world and any confrontation with them has to have some sort of functional sequence. The verse says that Jihād should first be waged against those of the disbelievers who were near. 'Being near' could be taken in terms of the place, that is, the disbelievers who live closer to home base should be fought against first. And it could also be understood in terms of relationship, that is, those who are near in kinship, parentage and other social bonds should be given precedence. This is because Islāmic Jihād is essentially carried out in their interest and for their well being, therefore, when it comes to care and concern, kinsfolk have precedence – similar to the command given to the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** **وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ** (And warn your near relatives against the punishment of Allah – 26:214). He carried out the command by assembling people from his family and conveyed to them the Word of Allah as revealed to him. The circle then became larger. Keeping the same principle of near and far, confronted first, as compared to others, were disbelievers who lived in the vicinity of Madīnah, such as Banū Qurayzah, Banū Nadīr and the people of Khaibar. After that came the fight against the rest

within the Arabian Peninsula. And after things were settled there, came the last command to fight the disbelievers of Byzantium that resulted in the expedition of Tabūk.

In the second sentence of verse 123: وَلِيَجْزُوا فِيكُمْ غِلَظَةً (and let them find severity in you), the word: غِلَظَةً (*ghilḥah*) means severity or toughness. The sense is that the disbelievers must be confronted in a manner that would not allow them to take their adversary to be weak.

The sentence: كَرَّادَتْهُمْ إِنِّتَا (they have been increased in faith by it) in verse 124 tells us that the reciting the verses of the Qur'an, pondering over them, and acting in accordance with their dictates makes one advance in faith. One feels changes for the better, the higher. When 'Īmān increases, so does its light and sweetness. Once in this blissful state, one starts seeing obedience to Allah and His Rasūl as easy. 'Ibādah becomes inviting. One can feel the very taste of it. Sins pose no problems, for one starts hating sins by his own nature. They tempt no more. In fact, they irritate and vex.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه has said, 'when 'Īmān enters the heart, it is like a radiant dot. As 'Īmān increases, its radiance increases, until the whole heart becomes blissfully radiant. Similarly, disbelief and hypocrisy start appearing on the heart first as a black dot. Then, with every increase in sin and disbelief, the dot keeps increasing in size until the whole heart turns black.' (Maḥzarī). For this reason, the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to tell each other, 'let us sit together for a while and remind each other of things relating to our *dīn* and 'ākhirah so that it increases our 'Īmān.'

In verse 126: يُفْتَنُونَ فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ (they are put to trial every year once or twice), hypocrites have been warned about their incorrigible hypocrisy and constant breach of trust which brought all sorts of troubles for them every year once or twice. They saw the defeat of their disbelieving accomplices, the *kuffār* of Makkah. Then, they had to face the disgrace brought upon them when their hypocrisy was exposed. So, there was no dearth of warning signals for them. Incidentally, the count of 'once' or 'twice' here does not signify the numbers one and two as such. In fact, the purpose is to stress that this chain of action and reaction keeps moving all the time yet they take no lesson from what happens to them.

Verses 128 - 129

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ
 عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ
 حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ
 الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١٢٩﴾

Surely, there has come to you a Messenger from amongst you, hard on whom is your suffering, for the good of you he craves and for believers he is kind, merciful. [128]

So, if they turn away, say, "Enough for me is Allah. There is no god but He. In Him I have placed my trust, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne." [129]

Commentary

These are the last verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah where it has been declared that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is very kind and merciful for the entire creation of Allah, particularly so for Muslims. Then, in the last verse, he has been told that he should observe patience and trust Allah even if there are people who do not come to believe despite all his efforts.

That this theme appears at the end of Sūrah Al-Taubah happens to be very appropriate. It will be recalled that this Sūrah has been full of references to the declaration of withdrawal from the disbelievers, the ultimate severance of relationship with them and then fighting in Jihād against them. This is, however, the last resort of the Call to Allah subject to the condition that the initial steps of Da'wah (call) and Tablig (communication of the Message) leave no hope of correction and betterment. But, the basic function of the prophets is to invite people to the way of Allah with love, affection, sympathy and an earnest desire for their well-being; if they have to face aversion from the people or have to suffer some hardships, they are supposed to leave it to Allah and place their trust in Him, for He is the Lord of the Great Throne. By saying the Rabb or Lord of the Great 'Arsh, the purpose is to lay stress on the fact that He encompasses the entire creation.

The last two verses, according to Sayyidnā 'Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b رضي الله

عنه, are the last verses of the Qur'ān. After these no other verse was revealed and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم left the mortal world. This is also the statement of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه . (Qurtubī)

Great merits of these two verses appear in Ḥadīth. Sayyidnā Abū-d-Dardā' رضى الله عنه says, 'One who recites these verses three times, morning and evening, shall find that Allah Ta'ālā makes things easy for him (Qurtubī)' Allah knows best.

The Commentary

On

Sūrah Al-Taubah

Ends here.